

MISSIO SPIRITUS: AN ENGAGEMENT WITH AMOS YONG'S
PNEUMATOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to engage with Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Religions with the hope of showing the importance of the mission of the Spirit for the church's engagement with other religions and to show some misunderstandings in his proposal of both Trinitarian and Pneumatological doctrines. This will be done in several ways.

First, a foundational understanding of the prominence of the issue of pluralism in the church's engagement with the culture will be discussed, as well as the recent call for a shift from a Christological starting point to a Pneumatological one. This will be done, in the second part, through an engagement with the works of Jacques Dupuis, Gavin D'Costa, Frederick Crowe, and Clark Pinnock. Third, Amos Yong's pneumatological approach will be discussed in length so that it may be engaged carefully and critically. Fourth, we will look at how Yong's approach has been received by Evangelical theologians such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Keith Johnson, Timothy Tennent, Todd Miles, Harold Netland, and Gerald McDermott. Fifth, we will look at the relations, processions, and missions of the persons of the Trinity, as well as the person and work of the Spirit, in order to see if Yong's proposal holds theological weight. With this theological foundation, we will then discuss what a proper Evangelical Pneumatological Theology of Religions might look like. And finally, we will draw several conclusions about Yong's proposal and what it means in regards to our engagement with other religions.

In summation, this thesis argues that Yong's proposal, as a result of misunderstandings of the mission, person, and work of the Holy Spirit, is not sufficient as a model for an Evangelical Theology of Religions. However, his foundation can be the beginning of helpful correctives for the church today if taken seriously and combined with proper Trinitarian and Pneumatological Theology.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Necessity of Missional Theology

Christendom is dead. This refrain has been heard for decades now as more and more churches have recoiled into their broken down church buildings in flight from an increasingly non-Christian, often hostile, culture. Postmodern relativism, secularism, and humanism, among other things, have left the church asking the question, “How in the world do we speak the Gospel to this culture whose very worldview is so contrary to the message we bring?” Thankfully, many churches have shaken off the initial “shell-shock” of this shift in our cultural milieu, and have begun peeking out in an attempt to see how to proceed. Enter the missional church advocates.

Although it is not my goal to be comprehensive in our discussion here, there are several points that the missional church model advocates have stressed in attempting to show the paradigm shifts that the church must take in our increasingly globalized world. Craig Van Gelder, in an attempt to sum them up, notes four themes.¹ First, God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world. Second, God’s mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God. Third, the missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom,

¹ See Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) 4.

globalized context. And fourth, the internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission. In summation, the church is now to be understood as participating in the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God, as everyday missionaries, for the advancement of His kingdom through an engagement with the “postmodern, Post-Christendom, and globalized” culture. And, as any missionary can attest, engagement with a globalized culture inevitably runs into critical engagement with religious pluralism. Here is where we hit the heart of Amos Yong’s burden for the Church.

But before we can to begin to address the issue of religious pluralism and look at the works of Amos Yong, we must briefly unpack some implications of what it means for the church to be engaged in the *Missio Dei*.² Many have reminded us that the term “mission”, long before referring to the means by which the church fulfills the Great Commission, was “used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity (and its relations and processions), that is, of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son,” stemming from *mittere*, to send.³ This is helpful to begin with since many, in the attempt to talk about what it means to be missional, have

² The term *Missio Dei* was coined during the fifth international missionary council conference at Willingen, Germany in 1952 by Georg F. Vicedom. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006) 63. Vicedom’s big takeaway for the idea of the *Missio Dei* was that “the missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God.” See Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965) 5. Karl Barth is also thought to have begun this line of thinking by starting his *Church Dogmatics* with an exposition on the importance of the Trinity.

³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 1. See also John F. Hoffmeyer, “The Missional Trinity,” in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40/2 (Wiley Periodical Inc. and Dialog Inc., 2001) 108; Jeremy D. Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions? Development in Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan,” in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 77/1 (Kildare, Ireland: Pontifical University, Saint Patrick’s College, 2012) 41; John Bolt, “The Missional Character of the (Herman and J. H.) Bavinck Tradition,” in *The Bavinck Review*, 5 (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2014) 44.

made the term mission so inclusive that it ceases to mean anything anymore.⁴ The idea thus follows that, if God is a missional God by nature, than being missional can be attributed to Him as part of His very being.⁵ And if God is missional by nature, then for the church to be engaged in the mission of God it must be directly related to a proper understanding of who God is, and specifically who God is Triune. Here we have the basic connection between the renewed zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity and the church's understanding of the *Missio Dei*.

However, most missional church advocates leave the discussion of the Trinity at a surface level, merely stressing the importance of a social understanding of the Trinity for the life, organization, and structure of the church.⁶ The church, then, is stressed as being communal, diverse, self-sacrificial, loving, and “sent” (in a generic use of the term). Although this understanding is helpful in combatting the over-individualization, the complacency, and the lack of diversity in many churches today, it unfortunately does not tie us deeply enough to a proper understanding of the doctrine of God, primarily the God who is Trinity. The Trinity, although communal, diverse, and “sent,” cannot be used as a one-to-one correlation to how the church is supposed to be, for this will inevitably turn into an anthropomorphizing of the Godhead or a deification of humanity.⁷ Understanding

⁴ Stephen Neill prophetically wrote many years ago, “If everything is mission, then nothing is mission.” See Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension* (London: Edinburgh Publishing House, 1959) 81.

⁵ Stephen Holmes puts forth a great argument for understanding “missional” as being an attribute of God, not merely an activity that He engages in. See Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Towards a Theology of God a Missionary,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/1 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2006). See also John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 70-75.

⁶ Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008) 35; JR Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012) 88-96; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁷ This is why Volf, in *After Our Likeness*, talks about the church as in the “image” of the Trinity. He says, “the question is not whether the Trinity should serve as the model for human community; the question is

the necessity of analogous relations of the Godhead to humanity is vitally important in this regards, however I believe that a classical understanding of the Trinity, rather than a social one, will benefit us more here. The reason for this, as we will see, is that it tends to take more seriously the individual persons of the Trinity, as well as their relations and processions, which directly dictate their “missions.” And, as seems to be the case when it comes to the study of the Trinity in general, and especially any discussion of the divine missions of the Trinity, we must begin with several of the leading Catholic scholars in this field and how they have influenced some of the contemporary Protestant scholars who have joined the discussion. Instead of just dwelling on the overarching missional nature of the Trinity, and the analogous aspects by which we should “mirror it,” my hope is to unpack the classic doctrine of the divine missions, specifically looking at the divine missions of the Son and the Spirit and how they can directly aid us in understanding how the church is to engage with religious pluralism as laid out by Amos Yong.

Many evangelicals use Christology exclusively to talk about the church’s engagement with religious pluralism, which makes looking at the divine mission of the Spirit imperative to our discussion of a Trinitarian theology of religions. Yong says that Christology often creates an “impasse” that the church experiences when dialoging with those of other religious beliefs, resulting in rigid exclusivism or an inability to engage with those outside of our own particular worldview.⁸ Others say that the “pneumatological deficiency” of the Western tradition, as well as Trinitarian theology,

rather in which respects and to what extent it should do so... God... can be applied to human community only in an analogous rather than a univocal sense.” Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity is Our Social Program:’ The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” in *Modern Theology* 14/3 (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1998) 405.

⁸ See Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

calls for “the missional church... to focus more on the differentiation between the mission of the Word and the mission of the Spirit.”⁹ I think a rather lengthy quote from Yong and Kärkkäinen is appropriate here to solidify the point that a pneumatological starting point in missions may prove to be a helpful corrective for many in the church today as a more holistic way of understanding our appointed mission. They say:

*The focus on a comprehensive pneumatology helps mission to obtain a clear vision of the work of the Triune God in the world. Creation and creatures are works of God brought forth by the Spirit, the source of life and movement. The history of Jesus Christ, the content of the message of the Kingdom, is pneumatological. He is not only the giver of the Spirit, but also the bearer of the Spirit, the One who was also raised up by the same Spirit. The church of Christ is constituted by the Spirit and called to missionary service to the nations. The Spirit will bring forth the consummation of God’s salvific work toward creation and humanity, redeemed by the Son, to the glory of the Father.*¹⁰

⁹ John F. Hoffmeyer, “The Missional Trinity,” 111. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen even accuses Bosch of having a light role of the Holy Spirit in his magisterial work *Transforming Mission*. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Truth on Fire”: Pentecostal Theology of Mission and the Challenges of a New Millennium,” in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*. 3/1 (Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2000) 38. See also Bruce Marshall, “What Does the Spirit Have to Do?” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology* (edited by Michael Dauphinais and Mathew Levering; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005) 62.

¹⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 2002) 226. Similarly, Kärkkäinen says, “While I have expressed my reservations about building a theology of religions at the expense of Christology, I still believe that a biblical, systematically coherent theology of religions must stand on a pneumatological foundation; otherwise, the Spirit of God is not a constitutive person of the Trinity.” See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Inquiry,” in *International Review of Mission* 9/1 (World Council of Churches, 2002) 194.

We will soon understand Yong's pneumatological hermeneutic a little bit better, but first we must briefly look at the Catholic scholars who have been monumental in paving the way for this discussion. Reaching its pinnacle at Vatican II, Catholic theology of religions has grown more and more open to the work of the Spirit in the world, including other religions, and has sought to understand what that means for our engagement and interaction with those of different faith backgrounds. Kärkkäinen says that the inclusivist position, which states that "while salvation is ontologically founded upon the person of Christ, its benefits have been made universally available by the revelation of God," is the "official standpoint of the post-conciliar Roman Catholic Church."¹¹ This inclusivist approach is understood as to allow the reality of truth and holiness to be present in non-Christian religions, as was mentioned in the Vatican II documents.¹² This, then, may have been one of the first substantial times in which the Church (particularly the Catholic Church) began to think about the opportunity of a dialogical and more open approach to other religions. And as the Catholic Church began to think of these realities in light of their Trinitarian theology, they begin to articulate a pneumatological approach to a Trinitarian theology of religions. Primarily, this was foundational for Jacques Dupuis and Gavin D'Costa, as well as Frederick Crowe and eventually for the Evangelical theologian Clark Pinnock.

¹¹ Kärkkäinen, "Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions," 188. Christian Jacob-Vandegier says, "If before the council the question still lingered regarding whether or not God saves people of other faiths, the council definitively affirmed that possibility and reinforced a different line of inquiry... a question... about their relationship to the church." See Christian Jacob-Vandegier, "The Unity of Salvation: Divine Missions, the Church, and World Religions," in *Theological Studies* 75/2 (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014) 260.

¹² See Amos Yong, "Guests of Religious Others: Theological Education in the Pluralistic World," in *Theological Education* 47/1 (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012) 77.

Chapter 2

Grounding Religious Pluralism in the Mission of the Spirit

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen helpfully defines theology of religions as “that discipline of theological studies which attempts to account theologically for the meaning and value of other religions.”¹³ Those engaged in theology of religions have recently built their foundation in the Trinity under the banner of the Trinity as the paradigmatic ideal of unity within diversity.¹⁴ The thinking, then, is that, if in the life of God the same will is being worked out in very distinct and diverse persons, then too can God use the diverse cultures, languages, and even religions of this world, to bring about His will. Karl Rahner, starting with this belief, concluded that God can bring salvation to all religions apart from Christ, with adherents of other faiths being “anonymous Christians” because of the universal grace of God.¹⁵ As we briefly saw above, and will see more fully in the

¹³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, & Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 20.

¹⁴ Keith E. Johnson says, “According to D’Costa, the doctrine of the Trinity provides a key to understanding other religions because of the way it holds together particularity and universality.” See Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011) 39.

¹⁵ In essence, God has spoken universally to all through the Spirit, allowing them to attain salvation through whichever transcendental method they chose. This resulted in many being considered “anonymous Christians,” in Rahner’s words. My belief, as well as all those in the discussion of this paper, is that it is not right nor fair to those of other faiths to consider them “anonymous Christians,” and that more must be said to this end. We will discuss this more in later sections of this paper. With that assumption, however, we will not spend much, if any, time discussing Rahner’s input into this subject, although without his work we would have significantly less to talk about in this regards.

next section, the particular revelation of God through Jesus Christ has seemed to create a belief that this is, was, and will be the only way in which God has worked and revealed Himself in the world. But any well-informed Christian knows that this is not completely true; God has also always worked, before and after the particular revelation of Christ, as well as through general revelation in creation. As we will see in this paper, we must ask in what ways God is now revealing himself through the unique, universal work of His Spirit.¹⁶

Jacques Dupuis

Jacques Dupuis picks up on this thread and begins to realize that God has continued to work in a way through His Spirit that is, as quoted by Kärkkäinen, “genuinely different from what one finds in God’s Word in Jesus, yet never contradictory to it. In other words, God may have – and indeed seems to have – more to say to humanity than what God has said in Jesus...Jesus does not exhaust the revelation of God.”¹⁷ Dupuis arrived at two convictions early on in his life, and spent his entire life trying to wrestle with “the need to overcome the apparent either-or dilemma between these two affirmations;” namely Jesus Christ as the universal savior and “the positive meaning in God’s plan of salvation of the

¹⁶ Samuel Solivan says that this prevenient ministry of the Spirit as being given to unbelievers “opens up new possibilities for dialogue with other faiths..., compels us to trust the Spirit’s leading in nontraditional circumstances..., (and) should lead us to recognize God’s sovereign presence in grace in the world apart from a Christian experience.” See Samuel Solivan, “Interreligious Dialogue: An Hispanic American Pentecostal Perspective,” in *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Ed. by S. Mark Heim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 41. Also Paul Knitter seems influential for Yong, who suggests that “If we can take the Spirit, and not the Word in Jesus Christ, as our starting point for a theology of religions, we can affirm the possibility that the religions are “an all comprehensive phenomenon of grace.” As cited in Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 40.

¹⁷ This includes in Jesus’ speech and in himself. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) 56.

other religious traditions and their saving value for their adherents.”¹⁸ Dupuis later unpacks this, saying that “if the Spirit is able to give revelation that is different from that received through Jesus, it means that other religions have a ‘lasting role’ and a ‘specific meaning’ both with regard to the followers of those religions and Christians.”¹⁹ The thought behind this is that, although Christ has given revelation to all, and Christians alone realize it as such, this revelation is now being received by other religious traditions through the means of special revelation from the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Thus, Dupuis’ theology of religions rests on the fact that “the Spirit of God has been universally present throughout human history and remains active today outside the boundaries of the Christian fold.”²¹ For Dupuis, the Church is the sign of the Spirit’s universal activity, and not just the only ones to have received it.²²

This theology implies that other religions can actually be living lives of faithful obedience to the will of God in Christ *through* what they have received in the universal presence of the Holy Spirit, yet apart from any particular revelation of Jesus Christ. He says, “The Spirit is currently at work among the members of the other religious traditions. Its influence extends to them, mysteriously and secretly, in the concrete situation of their religious lives.”²³ Thus, humble and open dialogue is needed to help discern and learn the

¹⁸ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 267.

¹⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 56. He will add that other religions are working for God and through His Spirit, yet not forgetting the fullness of Revelation in Jesus Christ. See Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 210.

²⁰ This is opposed to the view that many hold that they can understand this through general revelation, yet do not fully recognize it because of the lack of Christological reference. We will see that much of this debate comes down to defining the lines between general and special revelation.

²¹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 211. He says further that “the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit that results from the glorification of Christ is not limited to the boundaries of the church: it extends to the whole universe.” See Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, trans by Robert R. Barr (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1989) 152.

²² Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 161.

²³ Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 159.

ways in which this is actually being worked out. He says, “dialogue becomes not so much a way of converting each other or even convincing another of the supremacy of one’s own way, but rather a learning experience.”²⁴ In this way, Christians can actually expect to enrich their own faith and deepen their understanding of God as they “discover in their religious life the active presence and life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit.”²⁵

Dupuis pushes this a step further and ask the soteriological question, “While Christians secure salvation through the economy of God’s Son incarnate in Jesus Christ, (do) others receive it through the immediate autonomous action of the Spirit of God?”²⁶ Dupuis is a good enough Trinitarian theologian to realize that the answer must be “no” to this question or it runs the risk of separating the actions and operations of the persons of the Trinity, yet eventually says that Christ can mysteriously work through their own religious tradition, through the Spirit’s work, to bring about “a means of salvation.”²⁷ Although considered pneumatological in his approach, Dupuis is actually heavily Christological, seeking to find a balance that does not lead to the subordination of the Spirit that he sees all too often. He explicitly says, “The action of the Spirit and of Jesus Christ, though distinct, are nonetheless complementary and inseparable.”²⁸ Further, he says, “The influence of the Spirit reveals and manifests the activity of Christ and not the other way around. Thus the pneumatological perspective has the advantage over the

²⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 59.

²⁵ Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 152.

²⁶ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 212.

²⁷ So although he believes that the Spirit does not create a means of salvation for those of other religions apart from the work of Christ, he believes that the work of Christ *is being done through* the work of the Spirit, and therefore is in fact creating a means of salvation for them. See Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 268.

²⁸ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 212. Elsewhere he says, “It would be erroneous, then, to set Christocentrism and pneumatology in mutual opposition, as if they functioned as two distinct economies. They are actually two inseparable aspects of the one economy of salvation.” See Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 153.

Christological approach of directly evidencing the more immediate elements in the religious experience of others.”²⁹ Rightly holding to a strong view of the inseparable operations of the Trinity, he believes that where the Spirit is working in the lives of the non-Christian religions, so too is the Trinity at work in them, including the Son, and the church can begin to discern the ways in which the Spirit is revealing the Son to them in their own religious traditions. Thus, the work of the Spirit also means the work of the Son, allowing salvation to be mediated to those of other religions.

Dupuis believes that, although the goal is the Triune God, other religions can get there through other means, particularly wherever they are living in and towards the kingdom of God. Non-Christian religions, constitute “channels of salvation” through which efficacious grace is mediated to their adherents. Salvation then reaches human beings in and through their religious traditions, not in spite of them.³⁰ Thus, other religions contribute to the construction of the reign of God, and we must dialogue and work together toward that end.³¹ He says that dialogue actually stems from this reality, showing us that the Spirit’s universal presence proves that we are able to talk to one another about these things in a constructive and meaningful way.³² In dialogue we are able to discern which of each other’s religious traditions are of the Spirit and which are not. But, again, if the Spirit’s task is to shine light on the Son, then the Spirit can be working in these ways in other religions in order to shine light on the Son, who is the fullness of all things. So, for Dupuis, the universal presence of the Spirit allows for God to be working in other religious traditions in a way that is meant to point them to Jesus

²⁹ Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 153.

³⁰ See Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 100-1.

³¹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 214.

³² Dupuis, *Jesus Christ and the Encounter of World Religions*, 162.

Christ, even if they are unaware of Him and never have a real experience with Christ.³³ This also means that, “while not being in any way a member of the Church or subject to its mediation (in the theological sense), the ‘others’ are necessarily oriented toward it...”³⁴ The church is no longer the only mediatorial role of the saving grace of God, but the work of the Spirit accomplishes that apart from any work of the Church.

Gavin D’Costa

Following Jacques Dupuis, Gavin D’Costa continues this discussion, yet differs slightly. Kärkkäinen says that D’Costa’s theology of religions can be “summarized in this statement: because of the presence in the world of the Spirit of God, ‘there too is the ambiguous presence of the triune God, the church, and the kingdom.’”³⁵ D’Costa’s connection to Dupuis is clear, but he adds the contribution that the Church is somehow “ambiguously present” in the world through the Spirit. Although this claim is highly debated and could get us hung up, it is helpful to see the fullness of D’Costa’s understanding of the Spirit’s universal presence in the world. He argues that a theology of religions should affirm the mediation of Christ, the instrumentality of the Church, and the necessity of faith in our response to the Gospel. Jacobs-Vandegeer says, “most significantly, his position rests on the belief that salvation requires an ontological, causal, and epistemological relationship with Christ.”³⁶

³³ Whether explicit or not, the implication of Dupuis is that the Spirit can mediate salvation to those of other religious backgrounds even if they do not have the “fullness” of the Christological revelation.

³⁴ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 269.

³⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 69. He actually will go so far as to say that a refusal to consider God’s presence in other religions in tantamount to idolatry.

³⁶ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 269.

In his book *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, he begins by discussing whether or not non-Christian religions should be viewed as salvific, from the standpoint of Catholic orthodoxy. Based on the post-Conciliar documents, he draws the conclusions that the non-Christian religions *are not* vehicles of salvation. His pneumatological approach, which is similar to Dupuis', agrees with Pope John Paul II who says, "Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ."³⁷ Whereas Dupuis would say that the Spirit does mediate salvation in other religions, D'Costa believes that salvation is only mediated through the Spirit in other religions *if they know and believe in Jesus*.³⁸

Frederick Crowe

Before closing this section, I want to briefly mention one last Catholic scholar and one Evangelical scholar who have been influential in the discussion of a Trinitarian, and primarily pneumatological, theology of religions. First, I would like to mention Frederick Crowe, stemming from the tradition and work of Bernard Lonergan, whom we will look at later in this study. Crowe has been cited as offering helpful correctives, insights, and further elaborations of both Dupuis' and D'Costa's theology of religions. He believes that the answer to this discussion is "simply to reverse the order in which commonly we think

³⁷ As cited in Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 221.

³⁸ I agree with Kärkkäinen's analysis of D'Costa when he says, "His proposal corrects and expands the dilemma found in Dupuis's, who struggles with how to keep the Spirit's 'independent' ministry within the classical Trinitarian rules." See Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 76. Keith E. Johnson agrees that "although he acknowledges the universal presence of the Spirit in non-Christian religions, D'Costa insists that saving grace is not mediated through non-Christian religions." See Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011) 34.

of the Son and the Spirit in the world.”³⁹ By doing this, we understand that God “first sent the Spirit, and then sent the Son in the context of the Spirit’s mission, to bring to completion... the work of God conceived to be executed in the two steps of the twofold mission of first the Spirit and then the Son.”⁴⁰ Instead of the Spirit as bringing the particularity of Christ, the Son was bringing the universality of God’s love as being offered through the Spirit. Therefore, the fruits of the Spirit that we see in other religions can be understood as a partial understanding that comes fully in the understanding of Jesus Christ. He also describes the self-limitation of the Spirit in this regard, of which he believes the Church should further develop its understanding of.⁴¹ For Crowe, the way that the Spirit speaks in the lives of humanity is silent and more methodical than the way that the Word of God, Jesus Christ, speaks to them.⁴² Again, dialogue with ones who are filled with the Spirit becomes pivotal in discerning how the Spirit is working in them.

In short, Crowe believes that the final relationship of Christianity to the religions is a future contingent, something that will be brought to fullness at the return of Christ when the true eschatological unity of the Spirit is complete.⁴³ As such, each religious tradition can seek its own way and, as the Spirit works through them, they will be transformed in their contexts by God’s grace.⁴⁴ This plays out in people who live in

³⁹ Frederick E. Crowe and Michael Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 325.

⁴⁰ Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 325. It should be obvious to see that is a strong reversal of the orthodox position of the divine missions, especially ties to the *filioque* that says that the Spirit was sent by the Father *and the Son* resulting in the Spirit’s direct role of continuing the work of the Son. This will be discussed at length later, but it important to merely mention here.

⁴¹ Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 332-3. This is discussed in length later in this paper.

⁴² Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 340.

⁴³ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 274.

⁴⁴ Crowe actually believes that to understand the Son fully for who He is, we must better understand His relationship to the Spirit. Again, like we will see with Yong, Crowe believes that we cannot understand the Son apart from the Spirit, which can translate into someone of another faith who is filled with the Spirit being made aware of the person and work of Christ, even in their own lives. For more on this, see

communities of love, charity, and service. Those who live in such a way, according to Crowe, will prove to be living lives of faithfulness through the work of the Spirit, showing us that “no metaphysical necessity wed faith exclusively to the gospel’s proclamation.”⁴⁵ The grace of salvation is no longer linked with conceptual knowledge of Christ, but with a participation in the divine life of the Trinity being worked out in love and community. This, then, does not negate the instrumentality of the Church but allows it to be one of many ways in which the Spirit can work in the lives of those of other religious backgrounds, remembering that the fullness of the divine plan for human history still has a future contingent.⁴⁶ Thus, we can trust that they will be brought into the eschatological unity of the worship of God, even if now their faith is one that is worked out in a tradition outside of Christianity because of the universal will of salvation that God has.⁴⁷

Clark Pinnock

The other individual I would like to mention is the Protestant Clark Pinnock. Evangelicals joined the discussion of theology of religions in the 1990s, and Pinnock is thought to be the most prominent early evangelical theologian in this discipline. Pinnock’s work began several years before Yong’s and was clearly influential, even though not directly discussed in much of Yong’s work. Pinnock’s main task in his theology of religions was to try to avoid these two perils: “one is to say dogmatically that

Frederick E. Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tension in the Divine Missions?” in *Science et Esprit* 35/2 (Canada: Facultés Collège dominicain de philosophie et de théologie d’Ottawa and Editions Bellarmin, 1983).

⁴⁵ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 275.

⁴⁶ Jacobs-Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 281.

⁴⁷ This is primarily one of Lonergan’s foundations to his works.

all will be saved (universalism) and the other is to say that only a few will be (restrictivism).”⁴⁸ Kärkkäinen continues, “His theology offers a high Christology that takes the uniqueness of Christ for granted, but does not understand it in a way that closes the door of salvation to the majority of the people... Whereas the incarnation of the Son was confined to a specific place in time and history, its universal effects through the ministry of the Spirit can be transmitted to the farthest ends of the earth.”⁴⁹ He says that “the Creator’s love for the world, central to the Christian message, is implemented by the Spirit.”⁵⁰ Like Crowe above, he calls for a recognition of the “twin, interdependent missions of the Son and Spirit,” that identifies the Spirit as preparing the way for Christ, making God’s will “truly and credibly universal.”⁵¹ He uses Paul’s sermon at Athens to show that Paul alludes to Godly ways in distorted religions that could be used as the premise for interreligious dialogue (this is the *prevenient*, or common, grace of God). However, Pinnock helpfully reminds us that the key to interreligious dialogue is “to hold fast to two truths: the universal operations of grace and the uniqueness of its manifestation in Jesus Christ.”⁵² Discernment is key. For Pinnock, Gospel love, the fruits of the Spirit, and “Jesus, the light of the world, is the criterion for discerning the Spirit.”⁵³

Although he is much more positive in his outlook of other religions, that does not necessary mean that he believes that every religion is a vehicle of salvation or an ordinary

⁴⁸ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 100.

⁴⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 100-1.

⁵⁰ Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 187.

⁵¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 192.

⁵² Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 202. Further he says, “One can be sensitive to the Spirit among people of other faiths without minimizing real and crucial differences between them.” See Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 207.

⁵³ Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 211. As we will see later, the Christological element is what is primarily left out by Yong.

way to salvation. He exhorts that “the Christian Church in her mission to the nations should take seriously the meaning of religions.”⁵⁴ Primarily what we see here is the revolutionary insight of an evangelical theologian that “the religions, rather than being either futile human attempts to reach God (conservatives) or outright obstacles to a saving knowledge of God (the young Barth), can be Spirit-used means of pointing to and making contact with God.”⁵⁵ Thus, we have made it to the point in which Amos Yong begins his proposal.

Summary

In summation, the position held by these Catholic theologians, the evangelical Clark Pinnock, and the one that will help guide us throughout this paper, is based on the idea that the universal presence of the Holy Spirit in other religions allows the Church to more openly dialogue with those of other religious backgrounds in order to learn to worship God more richly and the distinct mission of the Spirit in other religious traditions. They all agree that the discernment of the Spirit’s work in other religions comes in recognizing “true Christlike practice in the Other,” yet they differ on whether or not God accomplishes the salvation of non-Christians either through their own traditions, or by a different means through the work of the Spirit. But is the Spirit present in other religions? Can other religions have salvation mediated through the Spirit’s presence apart from a knowledge and faith in Christ? We will address these questions and more, but first

⁵⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 103.

⁵⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 102. Kärkkäinen and Yong agree, saying, “If Christ came to be the fulfillment of all that has been believed about God, then religions, even when they are confused by sin, misunderstandings, and distortions, cannot be immune to the pervasive, unrestricted presence of the Divine Spirit.” See Kärkkäinen and Yong, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, 238.

we must follow this line of thinking and hear from one of the most prominent Protestant theologians in this field of our time, Amos Yong.

Chapter 3

Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Religions

Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong continues in the vein of the Catholic scholars above who, beginning with a Trinitarian theology of religions, honed in specifically on the work of the Spirit to posit a pneumatological theology of religion.⁵⁶ Yong, as we said above, saw what he perceived as an inherent impasse when approaching a theology of religion Christologically, saying, “If each religious tradition begins, continues, and ends with its unique set of commitments, people of faith will never find theological reasons for appreciating others on their own terms.”⁵⁷ The fear is that when the church begins with Christology, as it has often done, we are always left with an exclusive particularism that shuns the other and often leads to an inability, or unwillingness, to dialogue.⁵⁸ In an attempt to reconcile this issue, he suggests that we should approach the question of religious pluralism pneumatologically, stressing the Spirit as the universal divine

⁵⁶ To be fair, it is more appropriate to say that Yong seeks to have a pneumatological starting point for *all* theology, not just his theology of religion.

⁵⁷ See Amos Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Evangelical and Missiological Elaboration,” in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*. 40/4 (New Haven, CT.: Sage Publications, 2016) 298.

⁵⁸ Yong also mentions that exclusivism often results in our looking at others as either those to be evangelized only, or worse as those whom more forceful strategies of missionization and Christianization must take place. This causes us to demonize those of other faiths before we ever get to know them or talk to them, leading to the impasse described above. See Amos Yong and Clifton Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission: Towards a Renewal Theology of Mission and Interreligious Encounter* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2011) 160.

presence of God. He believes that, as Irenaeus first did with his “two hands of God model,” the Spirit may be working in a way that is distinct from the way that the Son is working and that this pneumatological approach may be more appropriate for Christian Mission in the third millennium than a Christological one. He says, “the perennial problem for Christian theology of religions has been how the affirmation of divine presence of the universe of human religiousness can be compatible with the affirmation of salvation through the particular person of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹ Yong, believing that the Spirit represents the universal divine presence of God in the world, including in other religions, states that we must look at the issue more universally, through the lens of the Spirit, rather than particularly, through the lens of Christ, as the church has seemed to do since the time of the patristics.⁶⁰ His hope, then, is to address the guiding question of “How might recent developments in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit illuminate perennial challenges in Christian reflection about the plurality of religions and inform the increasingly complex task of Christian mission in a religiously plural world?”⁶¹

By distinguishing the specific divine mission of the Spirit apart from that of the Son, Yong desires to avoid an ecclesiological approach that sees other religions as outside the history of salvation. Instead, “a pneumatological approach would view the church as the mediatorial instrument – and not the only instrument, it should be emphasized – of the Spirit’s work of salvation.”⁶² He uses the Pentecost account in Acts 2 to show that Peter understood this event to be an eschatological one in which the spirit

⁵⁹ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 35.

⁶⁰ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 39.

⁶¹ Amos Yong, “A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World,” in *Missiology: An International Review* 33/2 (La Mirada, Calif.: Biola University, 2005) 175.

⁶² Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 63.

would be poured out “on all flesh,” as shown by the speaking in many tongues of the people there.⁶³ He continues, “If the eschatological gift of the Spirit means, in part, that the outpouring of the Spirit has occurred, is occurring, and will continue to occur, then the redemption of anything, the religions included, may have past, present, and, most importantly, future aspects to it.”⁶⁴ We know this is not incorrect since, as Yong reminds us, the Spirit is that of Creator, Redeemer, and Eschaton. The Spirit as Creator gives us the “*ruah*” of life and links each person to each other and God, the Spirit as Redeemer links to Christ’s ministry, and the Spirit of the Eschaton shows the need for proclamation of Jesus as Lord and the inbreaking of His kingdom.⁶⁵ Since the Spirit is holistic and multifaceted in these ways, then we too can understand Him to be multifaceted and holistic in the way that He works in this world. The Spirit, as the divine presence of God, surely affects the realms of culture, politics, religious pluralism, and ecology as well. He says, “if the *missio spiritus* is driven by the pull of the eschaton, then Christian mission is less about what we do... then about our participation in the last days’ work of the Spirit to renew, restore, and redeem the world.”⁶⁶

The reason Yong makes his claim about the way in which the Spirit may be working to draw others to Christ is based on his Trinitarian theology. Again, his approach in all this, although pneumatological, is only because of his stress and understanding of

⁶³ Amos Yong, *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2014) 47. Yong believes that language is intrinsically connected to culture which would include religious traditions as well. Thus, the Spirit has been poured out into all languages, cultures, and religious traditions and “can be vehicles for ‘speaking about God’s deeds of power’ Acts 2:11b).” See Amos Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 300. Solivan agrees with this, saying that “Pentecost shows us the Spirit’s willingness to work in all cultures.” See Solivan, “Interreligious Dialogue,” 43.

⁶⁴ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 113.

⁶⁵ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 186-90.

⁶⁶ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 193-4.

the Trinity. He does this by using two points from Augustine. First, Augustine conceives of the relationality of the triune life chiefly in pneumatological terms. Yong finds precedence here to speak about the Spirit as the one who dictates even our relationality to God in the Trinity. He says, “The dynamic mission of the Spirit is to facilitate the relationship of the Father and the Son... Applied to the economic Trinity, the Holy Spirit enables the world to share in the divine communion.”⁶⁷ This also allows him to discuss both perichoresis and inseparable operations when it comes to the Trinity. Second, Yong believes that one can detect the movement of Irenaeus’ recapitulation theory in Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁸ The implication of this, for Yong, is that the world is now in a position to act obediently to God’s will, even if they do not confess explicit faith in Christ. For Yong, the Spirit’s work in the relationality of the persons of the Godhead, as well as an understanding of inseparable operations, can help us to see the Spirit’s intrinsic connection with all things that God is doing. He goes on to say that the Spirit’s role is indeed to shed light on the Son, but that in the end, He will show Him to be just that, the Son. As such, the Spirit still works distinct from, although related to, the work of the Son.⁶⁹ And with all of this, partnered with the orthodox view of the Spirit’s role in salvation, Yong can make a claim for his pneumatological soteriology that works

⁶⁷ Wolfgang Vondey and Martin William Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship: Passion for the Spirit* (Danvers, Mass.: Brill, 2013) 88. See also Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” in *Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ* (Ed. by Sung Wook Chung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) 116.

⁶⁸ See Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002) 63. In very brief summation, the recapitulation theory of the atonement is the belief that Christ’s death reversed the course of mankind from disobedience to obedience and that Christ’s life recapitulated all the stages of human life and in doing so reversed the course of disobedience initiated by Adam.

⁶⁹ Again, this gets us back to Yong’s understanding and stress of Irenaeus’ two hands of God model.

distinct from, yet related to, the work of the Son in salvation.⁷⁰ Thus, for Yong, the Spirit can work salvation in the lives of those who are of other faith traditions, since the Spirit is the universal divine presence of God, and thus the Trinity, in all humanity.

Yong claims that, when the Spirit is not limited to the confines of the church, then the offer and application of salvation become available to those outside the reach of the church as well. Todd Miles, who is ultimately skeptical and critical of Yong's work, explains that Yong finds the theological space for this "in the procession and mission of the Holy Spirit, because while the person of Jesus Christ is a historical symbol of God's reality in the world, the Holy Spirit is par excellence the symbol of divine presence and activity in the cosmic realm."⁷¹ By starting with the Spirit, other religions can be recognized as "dwelling within the province of the Spirit."⁷² It is clear to see that Yong's pneumatological theology of religions hinges on this understanding of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit as well as the inseparable operations of the Trinitarian persons in the realm of salvation.

Again, Yong believes that it is vitally important to see that the Spirit "blows where it wishes (John 3:8)," and cannot be limited to the church alone, nor can it be subordinated to Christ (as he fears is done in the filioque).⁷³ He points out that many have had an experience of the Spirit without a Christological mediation, as seen in the Old Testament, and that the Spirit "has both preceded Jesus in the history of revelation and

⁷⁰ Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 61.

⁷¹ As cited in Todd Miles, *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010) 231-2.

⁷² Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 232.

⁷³ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 75. He quotes Tillich as saying, "the Spirit is not bound to the Christian Church... the Spirit is free to work in the spirits of men in every human situation, and it urges men to let him do so..." See Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 82.

salvation as well as shaped the person of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁴ Without the Spirit, Jesus would not have been anointed to do what He was able to do. This, for Yong, is a proper Spirit Christology that often gets subordinated by the Christological starting points of most evangelicals today. This is also how Yong attempts to keep the Son and the Spirit together in the midst of his highly pneumatological approach. In essence, since Christ was reliant on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work set before Him, and since the church is expected to participate in the same work, then, not only are we totally dependent on the Spirit to accomplish it, but the Spirit is actually able to accomplish these things in the lives of human beings even if they do not know the name or person of Christ, although never forgetting His mission of shining light on the Son. He says, “If the mission of the Son declares God’s intention to save to actual flesh and blood, then the mission of the Spirit announces the universal horizons of the triune’s saving plan.”⁷⁵ The Spirit can work in other religions without knowledge of the Son being present there, yet the church can use their spiritual discernment to determine that they are, in fact, living Christ-like through the work of the Spirit. To sum up Yong’s thinking here, he says, “In short, the Spirit is but the spirit of Jesus Christ and the spirit of God, and any pneumatological theology, rather than being a “monism of the Spirit,” is an opening toward the triune God.”⁷⁶

Therefore, Yong believes that the Spirit’s presence in other religions is a means of grace by which they can begin to exhibit Christ-like characteristics apart from an inherent knowledge and belief in Jesus Christ as a result of the Spirit’s presence. Just like at

⁷⁴ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 68, 82.

⁷⁵ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 213.

⁷⁶ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 48.

Pentecost, Yong believes that these different cultures (many tongues) may once again, in some way, be involved in “speaking about God’s deeds of power.”⁷⁷ He quotes George Khodr, who says, “the supreme task is to identify all the Christic values in other religions, to show them Christ as the bond which unites them and his love as their fulfillment... our task is simply to follow the tracks of Christ perceptible in the shadows of other religions.”⁷⁸ Yet Yong isn’t even comfortable completely claiming that this is the work of Christ since, for him, Christ was able to do these things through the anointing of the Spirit. He also says that the religions are no accidents of history, “but are, in various ways, instruments of the Holy Spirit working out the divine purposes in the world and that the unevangelized, if saved at all, are saved through the work of Christ by the Spirit (even if mediated through the religious beliefs and practices available to them).”⁷⁹

As the title of his first book suggests, our task then is to use the Holy Spirit as the discerning factor of what constitutes the work of God in other religions and what are false spirits. This makes praxis just as, if not more, important than beliefs from a pneumatological perspective, since we may better comprehend religious otherness in terms of “dynamic praxis categories like ritual, piety, devotion, morality, and the like.”⁸⁰ The criteria, he says, include the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5, the works of the kingdom manifest in the life and ministry of Jesus, salvation understood from the Spirit

⁷⁷ Yong says, “In today’s pluralistic world, the many cultures of the religions of the world are also potentially conduits for the Spirit’s presence and activity in revealing the mystery of Christ and manifesting the wondrous works of God.” See Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 168-9. Here he is definitely drawing from Catholic Theology that “invites Christians to expect to find truth and holiness manifest in and through the lives of their non-Christian neighbors.” See Yong, “Guests of Religious Others,” 77.

⁷⁸ As cited in Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 63.

⁷⁹ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) 236. He also will argue that other religious writings have the potential of being revelatory of God. See Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 181.

⁸⁰ Yong, “A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission,” 178-9.

(forgiveness of sins, deliverance from demons, healing of the sick, liberation, and eschatological fulfillment), conversion in the various human domains occurring in the lives of those in other faiths, ethical conduct, signs of the coming kingdom, and the ecclesial marks of holiness understood in its realized and eschatological senses.⁸¹ He also says that we can see “divine presence marked by truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness, and divine absence marked by the destructive, false, evil, ugly, and profane.”⁸²

Yong is aware of the possibility of syncretism the potentiality of this leading to subjectivity when it comes to what constitutes the work of the Spirit of God, yet his hermeneutic suggests that multiple accounts of the world can serve to illuminate reality rather than stand in opposition to one another.⁸³ The question that he hopes to engage and answer is “How do we eliminate demonological modes of engagement but yet not lapse into a non-discerning relativism about the diversity of religions?”⁸⁴ Yong therefore calls Christians toward the large and often complex task of discerning where and how the Spirit of God is at work in the world, which he believes is the fundamental responsibility of all Christians.

This leads to Yong’s belief that a pneumatological framework is worked out in a theology of hospitality, specifically a hospitality that was shown through the life of Christ

⁸¹ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 88-98, 103-9, 139-42, 256; Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 105.

⁸² See Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 165.

⁸³ Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 57. In this vein Yong quotes Vanhoozer’s *Is There Meaning in this Text?* to affirm “a Pentecostal plurality, which maintains that the true interpretation is best approximated by a diversity of particular methods and contexts of reading. The word remains the interpretive norm, but no one culture or interpretive scheme is sufficient to exhaust its meaning, much less its significance.” As cited in Amos Yong, *Hospitality & the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008) 56.

⁸⁴ Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 157. What Yong means by “demonological modes of engagement” are the ways in which our presuppositions of those with other religious beliefs creates an inability in us to listen or treat them in a respectful manner.

and through the fruits and outworking of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ Again, discussing the dichotomy that we often place on orthodoxy (right beliefs) and orthopraxy (right practices), Yong says that “The scriptures are not merely catalogues of beliefs... Rather, the Scriptures are inspired by God, with inspiration usually connected to the Holy Spirit – for specific purposes related to Christian practices, life, and ultimately salvation.”⁸⁶ He also says that the majority of Christians believe that the spirit-empowered ministry of Christ told in the Gospels provides the paradigm that the spirit-empowered life of the Christian disciple should follow.⁸⁷ Therefore, he believes that we should be engaged in a “performative pneumatological theology of religions,” in which we are both givers and receivers of hospitality stemming from the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all humanity. He also links the plurality of tongues in the Pentecost account to the necessary plurality of methods, gifts, and works of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸ It is this diversity of works within the mission of the Spirit, linked with the unity of will between the persons of the Godhead, that allows Yong to begin to look at new and fresh ways that the Spirit may be working in other religions.

His framework here is based mostly on the Luke-Acts narrative, the accounts of Jesus and the early church, and the parable of the Good Samaritan.⁸⁹ Just as Christ was given the Spirit to enact hospitality in the way that He did, Yong believes that the different methods that are used in giving and receiving hospitality in other religions are

⁸⁵ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, xiv.

⁸⁶ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 40.

⁸⁷ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 41.

⁸⁸ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 62; Amos Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 300-302.

⁸⁹ Martin Mittelstadt says, “Yong’s entire theological framework might be seen as an expansion of Luke’s hospitality motif.” See Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 35.

“divinely appointed means of grace (by) which the world is drawn to God.”⁹⁰ A “doctrine of hospitality” can help us see that the exclusivist ideas of evangelism and catechesis and the inclusivist ideas of contextual missiology and interreligious dialogue are not against each other, but are different “practices” as led by the Spirit in order to complete His mission.⁹¹ The church, from the gift of the Holy Spirit, receives hospitality, and then is able to embody the hospitality of God through these different practices which work together to accomplish the work of evangelism and missions. He also says that “Christian hospitality is realizable in a world of many faiths only when it is reciprocated by those in other faiths, and such reciprocity is made possible by the Spirit who is poured out on all flesh.”⁹² Thus true hospitality, as shown by Christ, is that which is both given and received and can be understood as being the reconciliation that only God can bring. This allows Yong to make the case that the pneumatological approach of a theology of religions that works itself out in the form of hospitality (and dialogue as we will soon see) is “shalomic” and eschatological in nature, again pointing back to the essence of the Pentecost event itself.⁹³

This leads to his greatest stretch, I believe, by allowing hospitality to have the possibility of being redemptive and salvific as these practices draw people to God. He believes that the Spirit’s work involves reconciliation and unity in diversity, and therefore is redemptive by nature.⁹⁴ Pentecost was an introduction into the “convergence” of all

⁹⁰ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 63. He goes on to say, “The hospitality of God manifest in Jesus the anointed one in Luke is now extended through the early church in Acts by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

See Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 103-4.

⁹¹ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 65-84.

⁹² Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 90.

⁹³ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 217.

⁹⁴ Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 125-6.

peoples in the eschaton since “the poiesis of the Spirit transforms individuals and communities through their practice of hospitality, which reflect God’s desire to reconcile diverse factions into one new humanity.”⁹⁵ Since we are participating in the divine, abundant hospitality of God, then we too are participating in the “salvific-economic mission of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁶ Hospitality brings us in line with the final wedding feast, bringing shalom and the reign of God to the world. Thus, as Yong says, “Eschatological hospitality of God involves peace, justice, and righteousness.”⁹⁷ When Christians give hospitality, then, they are offering means of grace toward the “other,” and when they receive it, they are accepting and affirming that they too are filled with the Spirit of God who is offering this same means of grace. In receiving it, they are also recognizing their limitations and receiving what is lacking in them from those of other backgrounds, who the Spirit is using as a means of grace.⁹⁸

He concludes his “pneumatological theology of guests and hosts” with four theses. First, Jesus Christ is not only the paradigmatic host representing and offering the redemptive hospitality of God, but he also does so as the exemplary guest who went out into the “far country.” Second, the gift of the Holy Spirit signifies the extension of God’s economy of abundant hospitality into the world. Third, the practices of hospitality embody the Trinitarian economy of redemption. And fourth, the redemptive economy of the triune God invites our participation as guests and hosts in the divine hospitality revealed in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹ In summary then, hospitality is the

⁹⁵ Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 127-8.

⁹⁶ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 61.

⁹⁷ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 143.

⁹⁸ Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 135.

⁹⁹ Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 126-8.

way in which the church can participate in the work of the Holy Spirit and, as such, can participate in the redemptive, eschatological, peace-bringing work of God.

Ultimately, Yong's proposal is that a pneumatological theology of religions would solve the "impasse" problem of starting with Christ and would open up the possibility of dialogue with those of other religions. He believes that the universal presence and work of the Spirit in all humanity allows us to not only talk and find common ground with those of other religions, but also to be open to the possibility of learning and strengthening our own understanding and convictions of God in the process, since the Spirit is the illuminator and guide to understanding who God is and what He is doing.¹⁰⁰ The natural result of participating in hospitality with and for "the other" will be taking the risk of interacting and being vulnerable with them.¹⁰¹ His approach encourages Christians to recognize the Spirit's work in the world beyond the church and perhaps through surprising agencies. Tony Richie says, "A major part of Yong's theology of religions is to realize that in some sense the Spirit is at work in the religions, shaping and re-shaping them, or else mollifying their resisting spirits; and to challenge us to follow the Spirit's 'lead and work with him to do the same.'"¹⁰² If we are truly open to the possibility of the Spirit working outside the church, and specifically in other religions, then we will be pushed to more authentic, loving, and edifying dialogue with those of

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Solivan says, "The recognition that the Holy Spirit is and has been at work in the word in spite of us, and at times through us, should foster an attitude of humility before God's gracious love... (as well as) freeing us to engage others in religious dialogue that can afford the Spirit an opportunity to make known its presence in unexpected ways. See Solivan, "Interreligious Dialogue," 41-2.

¹⁰¹ Yong, *Hospitality & the Other*, 132. This practice is marked by humility, receptivity, gratitude, and non-triumphant behaviors, which can collectively be described as a "dialogical heart." As quoted in Yong, "Guests of Religious Others," 76.

¹⁰² Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 121.

other religions, “seeking to understand them first on their own terms rather than an a priori demonization of the other before we have had a chance to get to know them.”¹⁰³

Yong ultimately promotes “*intrareligious* dialogue,” not just “*interreligious* dialogue.” This is because dialogue cannot just simply be “a show of Christian interest for the sake of the other,” but should be “an authentic encounter with untold possibilities.”¹⁰⁴ It is a shift in the paradigm that usually starts with a demonizing of those who do not believe and an attempt to evangelize through negative apologetics (explaining why what they believe is wrong) with the end result being conversion to “our side.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, Yong calls for a “dialogical posture of openness to those in other faiths” and “a prophetic stance toward engaging such others from out of a committed Christian identity.”¹⁰⁶ Although at first glance this may not seem much different than what is already the norm, the difference is the amount of openness we have towards those of other faiths and the way we react to their beliefs. Instead of starting with our differences, Yong proposes that we “bracket our convictions” as a way to be open to hearing what they have to say without initial criticism or critique. Yet we must do this in a way that is “grounded incarnationally and pentecostally in the work of God...”¹⁰⁷ Again, as we bracket our own beliefs in an open willingness to listen and dialogue with those who have different beliefs, we will be able, says Yong, to discern what the truths are in what they

¹⁰³ Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 169. This stems from the empowerment of the Spirit on both parties in dialogue. See S. Mark Heim, *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 42.

¹⁰⁴ Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 115.

¹⁰⁵ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 129, 161.

¹⁰⁶ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 196.

¹⁰⁷ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 148.

believe and speak prophetically to them about how the Spirit may already be working in their lives.

The reason that Yong says that this is the case is as a result of our identities as exiles, “strangers and foreigners on earth,” and as such cannot possibly claim to know everything about who God is and how He is working.¹⁰⁸ We also understand that, in this identity we are completely reliant on God for an understanding of Truth and are thankful for the hospitality that He has first shown us. If God is in some way working through other religions, then the Church must be willing to openly listen and dialogue with these “others” to discern in what ways God is working there. And, if God is working in other religions, then Christians too can learn and be transformed by the dialogue they enter into.¹⁰⁹ He says, “The possible presence and activity of the Spirit in other traditions means the possible existence of theological insights in other traditions that may have a positive impact on Christian theology.”¹¹⁰ This is never easy, but is the way in which Jesus’ incarnational ministry of the Word worked, and, if it is to be tied with the continued work of the Spirit, then we must be willing to listen and partake in this “incarnational principle” of contextualizing the Gospel in the “different tongues of Pentecost.”¹¹¹ Yong claims that in basing our missions practices on the many tongues of Pentecost, we will see the importance of contextualization, developing different practices

¹⁰⁸ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 150.

¹⁰⁹ Yong uses the terminology of “converting” in some way to their views, which may be a little bit too strong of language. Nevertheless, the point is still the same: Intra-religious dialogue could, and should, result in mutual transformation and edification. Yong often cites the story of Peter and Cornelius to show how intra-religious dialogue caused “the Christian” to learn something new about how God was working, and “the other” to learn about how God was *already* working in their life. The stress here, for Yong, is how dialogue caused a *mutual* transformation between both parties, not just “the other.” For an explanation of what he means by this, see Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 184.

¹¹⁰ Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 317.

¹¹¹ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 144-6.

and methods for different peoples, being more open to listening rather than speaking, and a greater willingness to dialogue rather than to just shun those who are different right off the bat.¹¹²

Here, we must make a disclaimer. It is easy to think that Yong is then advocating for a lack of proclamation of Christian truth in our evangelism. This is not the case, however. Yong definitely says that the church must *begin* by “embodiment of Christian community and the Gospel,” rather than proclamation, embracing relational dialogue over proclamation.¹¹³ He agrees with Bryce Stone, who he quotes as saying, “The most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church – to be transformed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.”¹¹⁴ Yong believes that this was the strength of the early church: the embodiment of what a corrective community looked like under the Lordship of Jesus. Thus, mission practices become more about social justice and Gospel embodiment. Yet, Yong is aware that in dialogue, there will come a point in which a Christian will have to speak prophetically, and as Jesus did, saying, “You have heard it said, but I say to you...” Yong advocates for many different methods in our evangelism, and, although proclamation is not the one that he stresses as the first step in the process, it is in fact one more “tongue” that can be used in the process.¹¹⁵ One way he tries to find a

¹¹² Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 147-50.

¹¹³ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 202-3.

¹¹⁴ Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 175-6. Yong also cites Murray's *Post-Christendom* who believes that “instead of missions understood only in terms of proclamation to others, there is a reception of mission as embodying the gospel in lifestyle and works of service.” See Yong, *Missiological Spirit*, 177.

¹¹⁵ Tony Richie says, “In other words, he is not recommending that the needs of dialogue trump the necessities of evangelism. Rather, interreligious dialogue is broad enough to encompass a wide range of activities that can held in balanced tension including service, organized debates, opens forums, and so

balance between kerygmatic proclamation that creates impasse and “relational evangelism” is the sharing of personal testimonies, which “is surely something central to being proper guests, to be open and vulnerable to hosts who are in power.”¹¹⁶ The difference is that the embodiment of the Gospel can give us credibility and a common starting point between us and other religions that often act in obedience to Christ, whether they know of Him or not. He adds, “Christian witness may involve, in our pluralistic context, less the capacity to talk louder or do more to Christianize the world than the capacity to defer to others and receive them, even to the point of death.”¹¹⁷ Yong thus concludes that Post-Constantinian and Post-Christendom theology of mission will see the nature of the church on the periphery or margins of society, a greater focus on practices over doctrines, and will highlight the sojourner orientation that marks the missional stance of the contemporary church.¹¹⁸

In summation, we can trace Yong’s thought over the past two and a half decades as something like this: since the universal presence of God is manifest in all humanity through the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the mission of the Spirit is intrinsically connected yet distinct from that of the Son, the Spirit is active in those of other religious traditions, being able to bring the salvation of Christ to them apart from any necessary Christological framework. Therefore, Christians should begin their interaction with these religious others from a foundation of dialogue seeking to learn and discern how the Spirit of God may be working in these different religious traditions in a

on.” See Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 116. Other “tongues,” says Yong, include proclamation, justice and compassion ministries, and dialogue. See Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 224.

¹¹⁶ Yong, “Guests of Religious Others,” 78.

¹¹⁷ Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Yong and Clarke, *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission*, 178-9.

way that points to Christ. This dialogue can only happen from a spirit of hospitality that seeks to openly welcome these “others” without any preconceived assumptions or demonizing ideologies, as well as receive hospitality from them in the same light. When Christians learn to discern how the Spirit is working in the lives of those outside the Church, they will be more loving and accepting of them for who they are, and will not begin their relationship with the theological impasse of the particularity of knowing Christ.

Yong claims several advantages to his approach. First, he says pneumatology is the key to overcoming the dualism between Christological particularity and the cosmic Christ. In this we are able to see that the same Spirit that worked in the particular person of Christ is working in a similar yet distinct way in someone of another faith background. Second, pneumatology is key to understanding the tension between specific and natural revelation. Again, the Spirit works in a way that is not limited to the particularity of the Word and can shine new light on who God is and how He is moving in this world. Third, it offers alternatives to the impasse between the exclusivity of Christ and the reality of the world religions.¹¹⁹ This allows us to begin anew the dialogue between Christians and those of other religious traditions starting with commonality instead of conflict. Fourth, it invigorates Christian missiological thinking about theology of religions from a more robustly Trinitarian Perspective. Instead of focusing primarily on Christology in our missiological practices, we are able to be more open to different ways God is working in the world. Fifth, such a pneumatological and Trinitarian framework not only opens up further venues for comparison and contrast with non-Christian faiths but also provides

¹¹⁹ Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 47.

theological grounding for a multiplicity of missional practices in the interfaith context. If the Spirit is working all over the world in many different contexts, then the Church must learn the importance, as Paul did, of using different methods and approaches to reaching the world with the Gospel. And sixth, evangelical commitments not only to orthodoxy but also to orthopraxy and orthopathy are invigorated by pneumatological theology and its attendant practices vis-à-vis the encounter with people of other faiths.¹²⁰ No longer will the church be a “one trick pony” who stresses orthodoxy as the means by which someone is judged as having experienced God’s presence, but we will be more holistically minded of the work of God in peoples’ actions and hearts as well.

¹²⁰ Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 303. Yong says that “the prescription is ‘more than ever for a pedagogical paradigm entailing a holistic correlation in heart (affections-orthopathy), head (knowledge-orthodoxy), and hands (practice-orthopraxy).” See Yong, “Guests of Religious Others,” 78.

Chapter 4

The Reception of Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Religions

Yong himself admits that evangelicals have not favorably received his pneumatological approach to a theology of religions. Some critiques are as light as merely requesting additional information,¹²¹ and some as strong as Roger E. Olson, who says, "His openness to non-western cultures, including religions, is laudable, but the doors he opens – however inadvertently – to syncretism and pluralism will haunt the credibility of his work."¹²² Although many have responded to Yong's proposal, we will limit ourselves primarily to the responses of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Timothy Tennent, Keith E. Johnson, Todd Miles, and the joint effort of Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland, before drawing some of our conclusions.¹²³ This section will serve as a springboard into a theological look at the missions of the Son and the Spirit, their

¹²¹ Kärkkäinen seems to like Yong's proposal, but is fearful that his seeming subordination of Christology will be problematic, asking to see it worked out a bit more since Yong's first writings. See Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 281.

¹²² Roger E. Olson, "A Wind that Swirls Everywhere: Pentecostal Theologian Amos Yong Thinks he sees the Spirit Working in Other Religions, Too," in *Christianity Today*, 50/3 (Carol Stream: Ill.: Christianity Today, 2006) 54. Also Allan Anderson, in a review of Yong's *Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, says, "It could be argued that, however, he has overlooked, or glossed over, some of the fundamental and irreconcilable differences between his different sources in attempting to find harmony and consensus, and that the 'global theology' he proposes exists nowhere else except his own imagination." See Allan Anderson, "A Global Pentecostal Theology? Amos Yong's *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*." In *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 16/1 (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007) 98.

¹²³ Although I will be primarily drawing from these sources, I will refer to others now and again to help as needed.

relatedness, and the specific nature and work of the Spirit in the world to test Yong's proposal and determine whether it is biblically and theologically appropriate to draw the above conclusions. As such, it will attempt to be substantive, yet brief.

Timothy Tennent

To begin, Timothy Tennent says that "the strength of Yong's proposal is that his pneumatological approach places the discussion within a much larger theological framework... than the classic paradigm...(which) allows him to ask bigger questions in seeking to discern God's word in human culture, including the religious narrative of people who are created in the image of God."¹²⁴ Yet, Tennent sees three main weaknesses in Yong's approach. First, it isn't sufficiently Christocentric. He claims that Yong initially wanted to use pneumatology as the *starting point* but has let his pneumatological approach overtake his original goal (we will later see that this is a main critique of most). This does not allow Yong to sufficiently set criteria for discerning the work of the Spirit in other religions, finally conceding that "discerning the spirits will always be inherently ambiguous."¹²⁵ Second, his proposal still does not provide a way to move beyond a dialogue between reified religious traditions and structures. And third, Yong's proposal, like the classic paradigm, does not sufficiently take into account the very different ways religious pluralism is understood and experienced within the global church. Tennent believes that Yong's proposal "is no longer sufficient to only address such a narrow

¹²⁴ Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010) 216-7.

¹²⁵ As cited in Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 217. Tennent says that a Pneumatology that understands that it is now Christ who works in us through the Spirit is the only one who can fully understand the Great Commission. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 184.

Western audience,” but must take into account the dramatic shift in the center of Christian gravity.¹²⁶

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Although Kärkkäinen talks about Yong very briefly, and primarily just after the beginning of Yong’s proposal, he commends it because of “its importance and its realistic approach” by “investigating whether the Pentecostal/Charismatic view is biblically and theologically sustainable.”¹²⁷ His greatest response to Yong early on was that he hoped to see Yong develop how his pneumatological approach ties with Christology better. This is because Kärkkäinen himself takes very seriously the need to keep pneumatology and Christology tied, especially in a discussion about the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Later in his writings Kärkkäinen seems to settle with a view of a Trinitarian approach to a theology of religions that must take Christology more seriously, saying, “There is no doubt that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be established without a high Christology.” Further he says, “Trinitarian doctrine also integrally links talk about the Spirit to the Father and the Son and resists those kinds of pneumatological theologies of religions in which the Spirit is made an itinerant, independent deputy.”¹²⁸ It seems then that, although he is highly interested and praiseworthy of Yong’s work and proposal, he is ultimately critical of any approach that seeks to limit the importance of Christology in this discussion, and I fear this is the case with Yong’s proposal.

¹²⁶ See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 217-8. Tennent does an excellent job of addressing this very question in Timothy C. Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

¹²⁷ Kärkkäinen, “Truth on Fire,” 58.

¹²⁸ Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 119, 123.

Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland

McDermott and Netland, in their book *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal*, find similar weaknesses in Yong's proposal that clash with orthodox evangelical views of how to approach other religions. They claim that "Christian theologies of religions run into problems... when they marginalize the Trinity or misconstrue the inseparability of the three persons."¹²⁹ They continue by showing that the revelation of the Triune God has been made manifest through both Spirit and Son and that to separate them, or stress one over the other, would actually lead to a partial or warped revelation and understanding of the Triune God of the universe. Even within the "two handed" work of the Father through the Son and the Spirit, the Spirit is to bring the world into a fuller understanding of the truth that Jesus brought, speaking only what he hears from the Son (John 16:13), since He is sent from Father and Son. As they say, "Therefore, while theologians speak of the economy of the Word and the economy of the Spirit, there is really only one economy for the apostolic authors, especially John's Gospel – the Father does all things through the Word by the Holy Spirit."¹³⁰

This is ultimately where McDermott and Netland find fault in the theologians discussed above, namely Yong and Dupuis. They criticize Dupuis for asking why the Spirit would have to be "limited" to the Incarnation and for suggesting that the Spirit now "represents additional and *autonomous* benefits" apart from Christ.¹³¹ Similarly, they

¹²⁹ Gerald R. McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 47.

¹³⁰ McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 52. This is not to say that there are not two distinct missions or processions of the Son and the Spirit, but to affirm that the two distinct missions work together to fulfill the single economy given to them by the will of the Father. Marshall quotes Aquinas who says, "The Spirit leads us to the knowledge of the truth," therefore "because he proceeds for the truth," namely Christ the Son, who rightly says, "I am the truth." As cited in Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?", 66-7.

¹³¹ See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 54.

lament Yong's belief that "the use of Christological categories and assumption of Christian dogmatic superiority are somehow illegitimate."¹³² They believe that Yong has further separated the inseparable operations of the Trinity in a way that, as Kärkkäinen said above, has resulted in the Spirit being made "an itinerant, independent deputy." Yong's pneumatological approach, for them, has ultimately failed to take seriously the Christological implications of the Christian faith and the Triune God.

Like Tennent, they commend Yong for "pushing evangelicals to consider the possibility that the Holy Spirit might be at work among those whose religions have been traditionally dismissed as merely demonic..., (suggesting) that evangelicals must work harder to specify how we think the Spirit is at work outside the church and to specify criteria by which we can evaluate the presence and effects of the Spirit's work..., (and encouraging) evangelicals to be more Trinitarian and not simply Christomonist, with Christ in effect wholly replacing the Trinity."¹³³ Yet, they pose several questions for Yong's proposal including, "What is the Spirit doing specifically in these other religions?", "How do we distinguish between what is truly humane in other religious practices?", and "Is it possible to have neutral criteria when engaging other religions?"¹³⁴ To reword these questions would be to ask what is the result of the work of the Spirit in other religions (i.e. salvation, community, wholeness, happiness, fruitfulness, etc.), how do we determine what practices are truly right and good without further criteria, and is it

¹³² McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 57.

¹³³ McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 75.

¹³⁴ See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 75-6. Later, they answer that they do not believe that other religions mediate salvation on the basis that none of them "preaches Jesus Christ or contains Jesus Christ." Further, they say, "They might advance truth and goodness and beauty that point to various aspects of Jesus and his gospel, but only by the triune God himself working through the gospel is any human being saved. They can prepare people for the gospel, but they cannot bring the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore salvation." See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 159-60.

realistic to expect anyone to engage with another without Christian or any other presupposition influencing them? These are problematic for these authors and they question the validity of Yong's proposal on these grounds.

Keith Johnson

Keith E. Johnson is another who is fairly critical of Yong's proposal, primarily in relation to a classical, Augustinian understanding of the Trinity. He believes that "Yong's pneumatological theology of religions and Dupuis's Christian theology of religious pluralism gain momentum only by employing deficient accounts of the relations among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."¹³⁵ He also laments Yong's rejection of the *filioque* in an attempt to show a distinct economy of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁶ Johnson believes that Yong is only able to separate the missions of the Spirit and the Son by claiming that the Spirit does not proceed from the Son, but by the Father alone. He also says that by separating the mission of the Son from the Spirit, Yong creates two distinct goals in these missions instead of remembering that the "two hands of God" from Irenaeus are said to stem from the unified will of the Father for one goal and purpose – "bringing men and women into eternal contemplation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."¹³⁷

Johnson ultimately finds several big issues with Yong's proposal. First, he believes that although Yong waves the banner of a Trinitarian theology of religions, "he simply asserts that the Spirit operates in an economy distinct from that of the Son, brackets the economy of the Son, and then focuses almost exclusively on the economy of

¹³⁵ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 102.

¹³⁶ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 110ff. He says that this specifically goes against passages such as Gal. 4:6; John 20:22; 14:26; 16:26.

¹³⁷ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 115.

the Holy Spirit.”¹³⁸ This, for Johnson, shows that Yong operates under an insufficient Trinitarian framework when attempting to prove his proposal. Second, he believes that Yong has “severed the ‘two hands’ of the Father” by speaking of two distinct goals of the missions of the Son and Spirit. Johnson says, “Two-hands imagery underscores unity of action...(and) although the sendings of the Son and the Spirit are distinct in such a way that we must speak of *two* sendings, these two sendings have *one* ultimate goal – bringing human beings into communion with the triune God.”¹³⁹ He further claims that he severs the two hands of the Father by “failing to take seriously biblical teaching regarding the Spirit’s unique role in bearing witness to and glorifying the risen Christ” and “by bracketing Christological criteria for discerning God’s work.”¹⁴⁰ In these critiques, however, Johnson does commend Yong for later clarifying that his “theology of religions that begins pneumatologically must ultimately include and confront the Christological moment,” and for being “aware of the problems associated with a search for non-Christological criteria for discerning the Spirit’s presence,” although he does not believe that either realization led to a real change in Yong’s proposal that fixes the issues discussed above.¹⁴¹ Ultimately Johnson concludes, “By reinterpreting the Trinity...Yong..., in various ways and to varying degrees, undermines the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 120.

¹³⁹ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 121-2.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 123-5. He says that Yong, in his discussion on the Spirit’s work at Pentecost, fails to see that the goal of having people be able to speak the wonder of God in many tongues was to ultimately lead people from every nation to believe in Jesus Christ. Further, if inseparable operations speak of unity of will in the Father, then discerning the work of the Spirit cannot be bracketed from Christological criteria. This goes against 1 John 4:1-6, as we will discuss more in the next section.

¹⁴¹ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 126.

¹⁴² Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 218. The full quote includes the names of Heim, Dupuis, and Panikkar as ones who have also fallen into this undermining of the gospel.

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¹³⁸ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 120.

¹³⁹ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 121-2.

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¹⁴¹ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 126.

¹⁴² Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 218. The full quote includes the names of Heim, Dupuis, and Panikkar as ones who have also fallen into this undermining of the gospel.

Todd Miles

Lastly, one of Yong's biggest critics is Todd Miles, who echoes a lot of the critiques expressed above. He begins with an epistemological charge against Yong, saying that although he seeks to be grounded biblically in his understanding of the way God works, Yong also seeks his understanding from history, society, and culture, thus making the need for interreligious dialogue imperative for a Christian's understanding of God.¹⁴³ This, as well as Yong's apparent need for "relative hypostatic independence of the Son and Spirit, pneumatology to overtake Christology, and the necessity of religious others to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit," "challenges traditional evangelical convictions, practices, and doctrines."¹⁴⁴

Miles unpacks this claim with several arguments. First, he believes that changing from a Christocentric reading of Scripture to a pneumatological one is incorrect and that it "entails a fundamental misreading of Scripture."¹⁴⁵ Second, Miles is also skeptical of Yong's attempt to see the missions of the Spirit and the Son as distinct. He quotes several instances where Yong talks about the Spirit's role and "expanding, illuminating, applying, and communicating the truth which is embodied in Jesus," but isn't sure why this then makes "the mediating contact between humanity and the divine pneumatological."¹⁴⁶ On this point he concludes, "In an attempt to not subordinate the

¹⁴³ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 231.

¹⁴⁴ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 245-6.

¹⁴⁵ He says, "In short, reading the Bible as it presents itself leads to the inevitable conclusion that conscious Christ-glorifying belief in Jesus is necessary for salvation." Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 247-8. Also, he continues, "It is speculative and illegitimate to view Christ 'as an aspect of the Spirit's mission' because it ignores the categories, structure, and plot of the Bible." Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 262.

¹⁴⁶ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 251-3. He later says, "Pinnock and Yong are guilty of reducing the Spirit to a presence of blessing in their haste to affirm both the uniform love of God for all people and God's universal salvific will manifest in the omnipresence of the Spirit." Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 288.

Spirit (by seeing a universal scope of the Spirit's mediating work in all religions), (Yong has) subordinated the Son and reversed the roles that are developed in Scripture."¹⁴⁷

Thus, one of Miles' greatest issue with Yong's "pneumatological inclusivism" is that it "is based on a revision of the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁸

Miles also takes issue with the criteria that pneumatological inclusivists use to discern the presence of the Spirit, saying that "the establishment of criteria for such discernment has proven elusive," and that Scripture clearly states the criteria for discerning the work of the Spirit cannot be merely ethical behavior (fruits of the Spirit, etc.) but is linked to a belief in the deity of Jesus (1 John 4:1-6).¹⁴⁹ Finally, Miles believes, with Yong, that interreligious dialogue is vitally important, but for different reasons than Yong. Whereas Yong would say, as we saw above, that this dialogue is important for a Christian's understanding of who God is and how He is working (and not for the purpose of conversion), Miles says that "the goal of Christians in interreligious dialogue must be the conversion of their conversation partners to Christ," stemming from the belief that Christians do in fact have something that religious others desperately need: the redemption brought about through Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 256. Further, he says, "In their desire to create a relative autonomy for the Holy Spirit, Pinnock and Yong do not follow the Bible's own presentation of the Son and the Spirit." Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 258. Also, "A proper understanding of the mission of the Spirit only serves to convince of the necessity of Christ honoring trust in Jesus in order to be saved." Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 246.

¹⁴⁸ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 268. It is important here to note that Miles does not believe in the universal presence of the Spirit in other religions, to which many have said that "the burden of proof remains on him." See Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 137-8.

¹⁴⁹ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 318.

¹⁵⁰ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 344.

Summary

What is ultimately ironic for many of the evangelicals who have critiqued Yong's approach is that, in attempting to provide a Trinitarian theology of religions from a pneumatological starting point, he has seemingly subordinated, and at times lost, the importance of Christology in his Trinitarian framework. Lesslie Newbigin laments this type of thinking saying, "To set a Trinitarian paradigm over against a Christological one, and to commend it as corresponding to an egalitarian climate of option, would surely be a disastrous mistake."¹⁵¹ As we conclude this section, it seems clear that there are several repetitious critiques of Yong's proposal that we must consider. First, many claim that his attempt to discern and rely upon the mission of the Spirit as distinct from the mission of the Son runs the risk of severing the two hands of God from the unifying will of the Father and inseparable operations of the Trinity. Second, many claim that Yong's pneumatological starting point is unwarranted Scripturally and theologically from an understanding of the relationships and processions of the persons of the Trinity. Third, the claims that Yong makes about the nature and the work of the Spirit in other religions run the risk of sometimes revising the doctrine of the Spirit. Although other critiques about the nature of dialogue, the scope of the Spirit's work, etc. have also come up, it seems clear that the biggest and hardest hurdles for the evangelical theologians above to overcome have to do with the relationship of the mission of the Spirit to the mission of the Son, and an understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Yong is not unaware of the poor reception of his proposal by evangelicals over the last sixteen years or so, but we must, once again, challenge his conclusion with some

¹⁵¹ Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 7.

questions. Is it biblically and theologically sound or has he pushed the boundaries too far? Or, is this just an instance of theologians being fearful of something new and different? Most importantly, we must ask if his proposal stands up to biblical and theological scrutiny. This is where we must now turn our attention.

Chapter 5

A Theological look at the Mission, Person, and Work of the Holy Spirit

Kärkkäinen's question in the following sentence lays down a good framework for this section. He says, "Based on Yong's three axioms for the development of his pneumatological theology of religions, which are the universal presence of God in the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit in the Imago Dei that is present in every human, and that the religions of the world are providentially sustained by the Spirit of God for divine purposes, can we come to the same conclusion about the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the world?"¹⁵² For the sake of organization we will be looking at two distinct areas of study to determine if the above critiques are fair and if Yong's proposal stands on solid ground. First, we must look at the doctrine of the mission of the Spirit and how it relates to the rest of the Trinity, specifically to the mission of the Son. Second, and stemming from this, we must talk in greater length about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and seek to better understand what we can know about His person and work in relation to both those within and outside the Church. In essence, we will hopefully try to understand

¹⁵² Veli- Matti Kärkkäinen, "How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions: Trinitarian Prolegomena for a Pneumatological Theology of Religions," in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Ed. by Michael Welker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 54.

the immanent life of the Spirit within the life of the Trinity and work our way outward into His economic and external acts, concluding in how they come to involve humanity.

Trinitarian Relations, Processions, and Missions

Let us start with what seem to be almost “universal rules” of Trinitarian theology so that we build on a solid foundation. The first one we must affirm is what is often referred to as “Rahner’s Rule,” which states that “the economic trinity *is* the immanent trinity and the immanent trinity *is* the economic Trinity.” This means that if we are to discern what the Spirit can and cannot do in his external, economic works, our starting point must be in the immanent life of the Trinity. Therefore, the Spirit cannot work in his economic sense in a way that does not coincide with who He is in the immanent Trinity. This indicates, as Fred Sanders says, that “any theology with a weak grasp of the internal actions of the Trinity will be a theology under tremendous pressure to make too much of the separateness of the external actions.”¹⁵³ Second, we must affirm what is “pejoratively labeled the Augustinian Rule of Thumb,” namely that “the inner works of the Trinity are separable and the outward works are inseparable.”¹⁵⁴ I think Fred Sanders explains this better saying, “The external acts of the Trinity are undivided (*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*), while the internal acts of the Trinity are distinct relative to one another.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016) 133. I fear that this is what has often been Yong’s dilemma.

¹⁵⁴ See Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 58. Kärkkäinen later says, “the Augustinian rule is no good news to that kind of pneumatological theology of religions that seeks release for the Spirit from the confines of the Father-Son and Son-Spirit relationship.” See Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 59.

¹⁵⁵ Sanders, *The Triune God*, 132.

These two foundational statements allow us to have firm ground to begin discussing the relations, missions, and works of the persons of the Trinity.

We can then begin discussing Yong's assertions by affirming his call to see a distinction in the persons of the Trinity, for as Aquinas concluded, "If the relations were not really distinguished from each other, there would be no real Trinity in God."¹⁵⁶ "Therefore, there are the attributes that belong to one or other divine person but not to the three," which are often considered to be their notional attributes.¹⁵⁷ These distinctions are tied to the relations and processions of the persons and are thought to be "paternity, filiation or sonship, and procession or passive spiration."¹⁵⁸ They do not add anything to the persons, but help distinguish them from one another. As Lonergan says, "the divine persons are distinct insofar as each person has something distinctive," namely their relations as Father (paternity), Son (filiation), and Holy Spirit (passive spiration) and their processions of the Son generating from the Father and the Spirit spirating from the Father and the Son.¹⁵⁹ Understanding the relations and processions of the three persons allows us to hold firmly to the doctrine of inseparable operations and unity of will and essence of the Trinity, while remembering that there are real distinctions among the persons that often lead to distinct appropriated actions done by each one, yet without excluding the

¹⁵⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province; vol. 1; Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 1981) 153.

¹⁵⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: The Triune God: Systematics* (ed. by Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour; trans. by Michael G. Shields; vol. 12; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 353.

¹⁵⁸ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation* (ed. by John Bolt; trans. by John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2004) 305. Marshall reminds us that if there were no distinctions between the persons, there would be no way for us to tell them apart. See Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?", 69.

¹⁵⁹ Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 367; Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972) 292-4.

three.¹⁶⁰ We must remember that the three persons still will the missions of each person and produce the means to do them, allowing plurality and distinction within the unity of essence of the Trinity.¹⁶¹ It is these distinct appropriated actions, which stem from the relations of the persons, that bring us to the discussion at hand and specifically to the topic of the missions of the persons of the Trinity. It is here that Johnson's chiastic summary of Augustine's thoughts is incredibly helpful for our discussion:¹⁶²

A Inseparable equality of the divine persons in one substance

B Real distinctions between the divine persons

¹⁶⁰ Because the persons are different, their actions are also different (although they are never separated or excluded from the will and actions of the other persons). A good example of this is the Incarnation of the Son. In this, He "acts absolutely as God," but particularly through the means of his unique person. Yet the action of the Incarnation, although appropriated to the Son, is "simultaneously the unique act of the one person and the common act of all three. In the incarnation, the Father sent, the Son is sent, and the Spirit empowered. The distinction between the principle of action and the subject of action is key when discussing the appropriated missions of the persons in light of the unified will and action of all three in each. See Kyle Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56/4 (Chicago: Evangelical Theological Society, 2013) 794-99. See also David Coffey, "Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?" *Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005) 23. Marshall also adds, "Each undertakes (a) single divine action..." in a different sense... 'if we take it by appropriating (the actions) to the persons'... Rather we want to say..., that one and the same divine action is at the same time identical with the action of the Father, the action of the Son, and the action of the Spirit, yet the actions are not identical with each other, since each undertakes the same divine action in a different way from the other two." See Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?", 70, 73. Also, Justin White says, "While each of the divine persons is dependent on the other two to fulfill their ordained role in the working out of the divine will, they are all participating in the tasks of the other all the time." Justin White, "A Biblical and Theological Foundation for International Mission Strategy in the Local Church: A Trinitarian Model," n.p. (cited 8 February 2017). Online: www.globalmissiology.org (October 2011).

¹⁶¹ See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 306. Marshall helps by saying, "The modes of action are different because the persons are three, but the act is the same because the essence is one. Faced with this, we will naturally want to conclude that the actions must be three because the persons are, or that the mode of action must be single because the essence is." Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?", 76.

¹⁶² Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 102. Lonergan, in a similar vein, reminds us that since the three divine persons have one essence, substance, and nature, "whatever is stated of God by reason of essence is also attributed to each person, because each person is God." Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:351. Also see Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 11:509ff; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*, 259.

B' Distinction of persons in the economy of salvation

A' Inseparable action of the divine persons in the economy of salvation

This links us back to Rahner's Rule that reminds us that God's self-revelation of who He is and how He acts is grounded in the immanent Trinity but is *epistemically known* in the economic Trinity, which is most easily seen in the divine missions of the Trinity. Thus, we can say that our theological reflection on the distinctions between the Trinitarian persons on the basis of the history of salvation must begin with a fuller understanding of the missions and processions of the Trinitarian persons.¹⁶³

Even with Rahner's Rule in mind, Augustine is quick to show a distinction between the eternal relations of the Son and the Spirit and their temporal missions. Therefore, we must not fall victim, as many have before, to "inflationary Trinitarian language and speculation" that declares that since God is revealed one way, thus He must be this way only.¹⁶⁴ For example, Augustine states, "the eternal procession of the Spirit (immanent Trinity) is expressed in the language of 'being gift of God' while the temporal mission of the Spirit (economic Trinity) is expressed in the phrase 'being sent.'"¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁶³ Sanders, *The Triune God*, 121. Further, he says, "We are recognizing that the revelation of the trinity occurred primarily in the historical event of the arrival of the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit, rather than in the communication of a set of words or a series of propositions." See Sanders, *The Triune God*, 124.

¹⁶⁴ See Alister E. McGrath, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection," in *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections of Christian Faith and Practice* (Ed. by Timothy George; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 30. This is actually what Yong often laments in his proposal and why he calls for needed dialogue as to better understand God in light of how He is working elsewhere in the world.

¹⁶⁵ See Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 75. For a helpful table showing the distinctions between the mission and generation/procession of the persons, see Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 77. Jeremy Wilkins helpfully says, "In a technical sense, Augustine defined a 'mission' as the revelation of a divine person in his procession." See Wilkins, "Why Two Divine Missions?" 42.

temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit, therefore, are the epistemic means by which we can understand their eternal generation/procession from the Father.

Before we can begin examining these missions, we must make one more important claim. Keith Johnson reminds us that “inasmuch as the knowledge of the Trinity can be gained only *through* the economy of salvation revealed in Scripture, any conceptualization of the Trinity (immanent or economic) must possess a clear basis in the biblical Trinity.”¹⁶⁶ As Daniel Strange says, “God’s words have always been necessary to interpret God’s works.”¹⁶⁷ With that in mind let us look at the divine mission of the Spirit and how it relates to that of the Son, remembering that the immanent life of the Trinity must be seen in the economic outworking of the divine persons as revealed to us in the history of salvation in Scripture.

Lonergan reminds us that “the mission of a divine person is constituted by a divine relation of origin itself... (and) although such a mission is constituted by a relation of origin alone, nevertheless an appropriate external term is required.”¹⁶⁸ If, as Augustine has said, the temporal mission of the Spirit is tied intrinsically to the eternal

¹⁶⁶ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism* 83. Fortman says, “There is a good and growing tendency to go the way of Scripture and start with the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and then toward the end draw together a doctrine of the Trinity in terms of its biblical origins and historical development.” See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 303. The Lonerganian Method, as summed up by David Coffey, says that “Trinitarian knowledge gained from the Bible (‘Biblical trinity’) lead to a new understanding of God in himself (‘immanent trinity’) that in turn moves us to return to the biblical data and affirm them in a new way (‘economic trinity’).” See Coffey, “*Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*”, 8. Bavinck also adds that “Scripture alone is the final ground for the doctrine of the Trinity.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 329. A lot of Yong’s critics claim that he does not start with biblical revelation is his understanding of the Spirit and the Trinity. That is why this must be stressed at the outset of our discussion here.

¹⁶⁷ As cited in Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 332.

¹⁶⁸ Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:457. Fortman sums up Lonergan’s thesis here as “the mission of a divine person is constituted by the relation of origin but in such wise that it demands a fitting and extra term by way of consequent condition.” Fortman, *The Triune God*, 306. Scheeben agrees, saying that the divine missions are “prolongations of the eternal processions.” As cited in Fortman, *The Triune God*, 314.

procession of the Spirit as “Gift of Love” from the Father, then we must see that the Spirit acts similarly as the gift of notional love that is appropriated of Him based on the essential love of the Trinity to those on whom He is bestowed. This helps us to see the distinctive nature of the Spirit’s procession and personal identity. He is the Gift of Love from the Father to the Son, and as such, continues to be the Gift of Love of the Father to those whom God gives the Spirit to.¹⁶⁹ This love is both the love of the Father for us and the love that we can now give to the rest of the world, the self-giving *caritas* of the Trinity that we are unable to show until the Spirit indwells us.¹⁷⁰ This gift of God’s love in the Spirit is made manifest in the Spirit being the indwelling of God. For the Spirit this appropriated mission of Love is primarily said to involve the work of sanctification in the lives of those He indwells, producing charity and the fruits of the Spirit, and revealing spiritual things.¹⁷¹

It is here that we seem to break with Yong’s proposal for a completely distinct mission of the Spirit apart from the Son. Although the Spirit has this appropriated task of being the “Gift of Love” to the world in his own person, we must remember the chiasmic summary above and consider the intrinsic inseparability of His mission and the mission of the Son as well as the necessary actions of the Father and Son within the mission of the Spirit.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ See Bruce D. Marshall, “The Deep Things of God: Trinitarian Pneumatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, (ed. by Gerald R. McDermott; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 405.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall says, “In the end, the love with which we love God is simply the fullest possible creaturely share in the love with which the Father and the Son love one another from the foundation of the world – the person of the Holy Spirit himself.” See Marshall, “The Deep Things of God: Trinitarian Pneumatology,” 412.

¹⁷¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:320.

¹⁷² Bavinck says, “As the One who proceeds from the Father, the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from, and is always in, the hands of the Father, who sends Him, and of the Son, who sustains him.” As cited in Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:315. Similarly, Gilles Emery says, “First, the Father is the source of the sending of the Paraclete; second, the mission of the Son and that of the Spirit are intrinsically connected;

For example, let us examine what we believe to be the end or goal of the divine missions and then work out the necessary connection between the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son toward that end. According to Aquinas, “The end or goal of the divine missions is the removal of evil and the promotion of a supernatural good.”¹⁷³ Augustine writes, “The ‘sendings’ of the Son and Spirit have as their goal restoring fallen humans into a relationship of communion with the triune God.”¹⁷⁴ Lonergan posits, “The ultimate end to which both missions are ordered is the communication of divine beatitude to human persons in the heavenly city, to the glory of God.”¹⁷⁵ These definitions may be just vague enough to say they have the same end but are distinct enough to not have to rely on each other. Let us further unpack Bernard Lonergan’s understanding of the divine missions to better illuminate the realization that the Spirit’s divine mission is surely based on that of the Son’s by furthering it and continuing its work, and thus cannot be discerned apart from it.

Lonergan talks about the importance in the order of the divine missions, especially being the manifestation of the understood order of the divine processions, saying that, since they are ordered to each other, there is then a single, total end to both missions. In this vein he says that the Spirit works as a pledge of the inheritance we

third, the Son, participates actively in the sending of the Spirit by the Father.” See Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (trans. by Matthew Levering; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011) 42. Augustine says that this is exactly what Jesus is alluding to in John 17:22. See Augustine, *The Trinity* (ed. by John E. Rotelle; New York: New City Press, 1991) 161. See also Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (vol. 2; New York: The Seabury Press, 1993) 85.
¹⁷³ As cited in Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 51. I like how Thompson puts it also, saying that the twin thrust of the mission of God includes the proclamation of the Good News to the nations and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. See Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 70.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 88.

¹⁷⁵ As cited in Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 59. He also says, “The ultimate end of these missions is the communication of the divine good through immediate vision of it,” stressing the importance of the church as the visible manifestation of the mission of the Spirit. See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 307.

receive in our redemption in Christ saying, “The mission of the Spirit tends to the same ultimate end as the mission of the Son.”¹⁷⁶ Further he says, “The two missions have one total end, since the Son is sent to establish new personal relations between us and God the Father, while the Holy Spirit is sent to confirm these relations, make us temples in which He dwells so as to make us heirs of eternal life.”¹⁷⁷ In other words both missions involve adoptive sonship; the Son mediates the reconciliation of that relationship and the Spirit provides the means by which that relationship can exist as well as being the gift of divine love from the Father toward those whom He loves.¹⁷⁸ In this understanding there is no mission of the Spirit without the mission of the Son since the mission of the Spirit involves the furthering of the Son’s mission.¹⁷⁹ H. B. Swete claims, “Without the mission of the Spirit the mission of the Son would have been fruitless; without the mission of the Son the Spirit could not have been sent.”¹⁸⁰ Although this may seem to create a hierarchy

¹⁷⁶ Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:491. See also Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 44.

¹⁷⁷ Fortman, *The Triune God*, 308. Erickson describes the sanctification of the Spirit as “not merely the work of the mortification of the flesh, but also the production of a positive likeness to Christ.” Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998) 891.

¹⁷⁸ See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 307; Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:481. Lonergan continues, saying, “From all this, we gain some understanding of the order of the divine missions; for the Son was sent so that the Father might be able to love us as he loves his own Son, and the Spirit is sent because the Father does love us as he loves his own son.” Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:483. Wilkins also affirms this in talking about Lonergan, saying, “The Spirit is given inwardly and invisibly so as to confirm and sustain the relations initiated by the Son.” See Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 62.

¹⁷⁹ John Thompson says, “The Holy Spirit comes from Christ, makes people new creations in him, creates a community of faith, and conforms us to the image of the Son. He gives us many gifts and tasks and enables mission and service. The Spirit is the firstfruits and foretaste of our inheritance. As the one who unites us with Christ this reflects His role in the Trinity as the union and communion of Father and Son.” See Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 71. Similarly, Erickson shows how the Spirit’s mission is “subordinated” to the Son’s, but that does not imply that he is any less than He is. See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 363. See also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*, 278

¹⁸⁰ As cited in Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1996) 85. Zizioulas believes that the work of the Spirit is the sequel to the work of the Son, thus making their missions two parts of the same whole (i.e. in the unified will of the Father). As cited in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2002).

within the Trinity, or subordinate the Spirit to the Son as Yong fears, we must understand that each mission of the persons is eternally willed and produced through the actions of all three persons.¹⁸¹ As Thompson states, “The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are so interrelated that the work of each, while distinctive, is so joined with and related to the others that it becomes and is one work.”¹⁸² The mission of the Son could not be accomplished without the indwelling presence of the Spirit given to Him at His baptism and the will of the Father that guided Him throughout His incarnate life; likewise, the mission of the Spirit cannot be manifest without a proper understanding of the mission of the Son and of Christology in general that once again stemmed from the eternal will of the Father.

Before we dig into our most important matter – the fact that the mission of the Spirit stems directly from the mission of the Son - we must take heed of one more comment of Lonergan’s to understand proper Trinitarian theology, specifically an understanding of “circumincession.” Circumincession describes the reciprocal existence of the persons of the Trinity in each other, showing that each person resides in the very consciousness of each of the other two.¹⁸³ This must be understood in their relations, their missions, and even their origins. Although each person is an individual Subject, it must be remembered that each one is fully in the consciousness of the others because of their common essence. The implication of this for our discussion is that, although the Spirit may have a specifically appropriated mission for Himself, it is never outside the will of

¹⁸¹ Harvey G. Cox worries that Western Doctrine has “boxed in” the Spirit through this ordered understanding of the missions, but it should be clear that that does not have to be the case. See Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, *God’s Life in Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) 96-7.

¹⁸² Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 72. Again, unity of will keeps any appearance of subordination from being that.

¹⁸³ Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:417.

the other persons of the Trinity; the Father and the Son both conceive and will, as well as provide the means for, the Spirit's mission.¹⁸⁴ As Lonergan explains, "For just as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit possess the same essence according to a certain order, so likewise according to a certain order the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have the same knowledge, the same will, the same Power."¹⁸⁵ This ultimately allow us to avoid modalism and to keep the plurality of action within the unified will of the Trinity. This, then, would be a proper understanding of Irenaeus' "two hands of God analogy," keeping us from an unnecessary severing of the two from the unified plan of God.

From these assertions emerges shortcomings in Yong's proposal from a theological and biblical standpoint. What we see within historical understanding and within the Bible itself is that the mission of the Spirit directly ties to and extends from the mission of the Son. We must see here an intrinsic bond between the Word of God and the Spirit of God.¹⁸⁶ We see this realized in the creation account when God the Father, working through His Spirit, speaks creation into existence by His Word. It is evident in the prophets of the Old Testament who are reliant on the Spirit of God to reveal to them the Word of God that was the manifestation of the Will of God.¹⁸⁷ We see it with the writers of the Scripture who were inspired by the Spirit of God to write down the

¹⁸⁴ This is not to say that there are three different wills of the persons of the Trinity that need to be somehow aligned, but that the will of one is unified as the undistinguished will of the entire Trinity. To say it a different way, the mission of the Spirit is also the mission of the Father and the Son because of the unified will of the Trinity.

¹⁸⁵ Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:445. See John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13 for connections between the Spirit and the Son. Again, this may seem to create a hierarchy unless we remember what was said above.

¹⁸⁶ Millard Erickson actually reminds us that, during the time of Calvin, he was careful to stress this union since many expected the Spirit to function independently of Scripture, and were expecting to experience new revelations from the Spirit. Here, Calvin reminded them of John 14:26 – that the Spirit would not instill some new truth, but would illuminate and impress Jesus' words on them. See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 869.

¹⁸⁷ See Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 294.

revealed Word of the Father. And this Trinitarian interplay is especially clear in the life of Jesus, who being fully human, is anointed by the Spirit in order to accomplish the will of the Father.¹⁸⁸ This is a truly Augustinian approach to the missions of the Trinity, for he tries to link the “invisible” mission of the Spirit with the “visible” mission of the Word.¹⁸⁹ Ultimately, we must see that one of the primary tasks of the Spirit, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, is to reveal the depths and thoughts of God in a way that we can understand them. He does this by bearing witness to the Son (John 15:26), who is the image and revelation of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), glorifying Him and taking what is His and declaring it to us (John 16:14).¹⁹⁰

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit’s task of illumination transitions us to the specific works of the Spirit and how they intrinsically tie to the works of the Son. The Spirit is never said to come with words of His own, but was sent by the Son and the Father on the day of Pentecost to

¹⁸⁸ There are many here who try to make a case that the Son is subordinated to the Spirit based on this fact, but we must remember that the perichoretic and kenotic love of the Trinity allows us to understand the self-giving nature of the unified work and will of the Trinity. Bruce Marshall says that this suggestion actually has no clear roots in any tradition and raises theological problems of its own, including the disruption of the scriptural pattern of divine redemptive action in the world, along with many others. See Marshall, “The Deep Things of God: Trinitarian Pneumatology,” 407. Bruce Ware concludes “It seems that the answer must be that Jesus Christ, as a man, accepted the limitations of his human existence.” Bruce L. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005) 93. See also Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 301, 311. Last, Bavinck reminds us that “reversing the order of the persons, making Christ dependent on the Spirit,” was the heresy of Nestorius that Cyril fought hard against. See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 2: God and Creation*, 315.

¹⁸⁹ See Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 39.

¹⁹⁰ See Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 79-80. Emery reminds us that since Christ has a place in the sending of the Spirit (John 15:26), “The Spirit is characterized by the relation that He has with Christ.” Emery, *The Trinity* 39. Jack Levison says, “Throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit anchors an understanding of Jesus to the Scriptures of Israel. The Spirit’s primary vocation, its principal task, in fact, is to illuminate the person of Jesus by setting his words and actions in the context of Israel’s poetry, stories, and prophecies.” See Jack Levison, *Fresh Air: The Holy Spirit for an Inspired Life* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2005) 210.

lead us into “all the truth, for he will not speak of his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak....” (John 16:13).¹⁹¹ The Spirit does not operate in the world as an independent source of truth he teaches the truth as He testifies to Jesus.¹⁹² This means that the Truth that the Spirit brings must be in line with the revelation of the Truth expressed by the Word of God, through the Spirit, in Scripture. This foundation of the Word of God as discernment of the work of the Spirit is one that I feel Yong takes too lightly, and would helpfully, within the realms of orthodoxy and history, give us the grounds for discernment for the work of the Spirit that often seems so elusive.¹⁹³ For we see in 1 John 4:1-6, as we have mentioned above, that this is the way we are to test the spirits to discern the Spirit of God from other “worldly” spirits.¹⁹⁴ For Yong, discernment is through the moral fruit of humanity (see the section on Yong above), but for John here it is quite different. In verse 2, John says, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit *that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God*, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (italics are mine). James Dunn affirms this,

¹⁹¹ And these words of Christ that the Spirit speaks that become His own are also the words of the Father. See Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:477. McDermott and Netland say, “This is another way of saying that the Spirit’s teaching will never be untethered from the Son’s.” Paul also intrinsically links the Spirit and His revelation to that of Christ’s. See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 51. Miles says that “because of the mutual relationship between the Son and the Spirit, the “pouring out” of the Spirit at Pentecost is far more than a pneumatological event; it is profoundly Christological.” Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 320. All Scripture quoted in this paper will be from the *ESV*.

¹⁹² Miles says that this is why Luke begins the book of Acts with a continuation of “all that Jesus began to do and teach,” by linking the Spirit as the continuance of Jesus’ actions and words through the apostles. Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 316-7. Further, he says that “in Pauline theology, being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Word of Christ are complementary.” See Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 321.

¹⁹³ In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul admonishes the church at Corinth to remember that prophecy from God is not necessarily new revelations from God, but are tied intrinsically to His revealed Word, both in written form and incarnate form. We will talk about this more in the remaining sections. Remember above that Pinnock has already made this claim.

¹⁹⁴ Ware says, referring to this verse, “the Spirit’s presence and work are known as he makes much of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 108.

saying, “The most sophisticated criterion of all (for discernment), presumably, was Paul’s identification of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit that reproduced the same sense of sonship as had characterized Jesus’ own mission, the Spirit that produced the fruit of Christ-like character, the Spirit that shaped the believer to become more and more like Christ.”¹⁹⁵ Discernment of the work of the Spirit, contrary to Yong’s proposal, seems to *necessitate* Christological criteria. And it is here that we see one of the fundamental characteristics of the Spirit that must be remembered when considering Yong’s proposal: The Spirit is always self-effacing.¹⁹⁶

Again we recall Jesus’ words about the Spirit in John 14-16 and must agree that the Spirit does not speak on His own accord but in everything seeks to glorify the Father through glorifying the Son. Lonergan says, “Without the visible mission of the Word, the gift of the Spirit is a being-in-love without a proper object; it remains simply an orientation to mystery that awaits its interpretation. Without the invisible mission of the Spirit, the Word enters into His own, but his own receive him not.”¹⁹⁷ But when we

¹⁹⁵ James G.D. Dunn, “Towards the Spirit of Christ: The Emergence of the Distinctive Features of Christian Pneumatology,” in *The Work of the Spirit*, 24. Congar actually says, “The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and a Spirit of adoption. This is our state now – free Sons of God.” Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:125. See also Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:100, 217. Bruce Marshall adds, “Aquinas tends to focus above all on two particular actions of the Spirit” he makes us the Father’s adopted children, and he teaches us in the truth. In both cases the action of the Spirit is to bring about a specific relationship of human beings to the Son.” Marshall, “What Does the Spirit Have to Do?”, 66.

¹⁹⁶ Ware says, “So long as we make clear that the Spirit seeks always and only to point away from Himself to the Son and, through Him, to the Father, we can honor the Spirit in a way that also honors the focus of His person and work.” Further, “The Spirit eternally takes the ‘backstage’ position acting as ‘supporter, helper, sustainer, and equipper.’” Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 104. Emery adds, “Here, then, is the Trinitarian disposition of salvation: just as the effect of the mission of the Son was to lead us to the Father, so the effect of the mission of the Holy Spirit is to lead the faithful to the Son.” Emery, *The Trinity*, 173. Also, Kärkkäinen says, “The Spirit of God, however, does not bear witness to the Spirit but makes present the self-withdrawing and self-giving Crucified One... (the) Characteristic of the Spirit of God is a self-giving nature and a self-withdrawal, even selflessness. The Spirit is a turning to others.” See Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 138-9.

¹⁹⁷ As cited in Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?,” 63. Bavinck says that “While the Son and the Spirit have visibly appeared in the incarnation and the outpouring, their mission is completed in their invisible

connect the identity of the Spirit, and thus His mission as well, to its reference to Christ and His mission, we begin to see that “the Spirit is itself by revealing Christ as the Son and – in doing so – revealing God as the Father as well.”¹⁹⁸ Even Christ’s reliance on the Spirit in His ministry showed that the Spirit’s work was to glorify the Son, and thus the Father, by revealing to the world that He was who He said He was, the Savior of this world.¹⁹⁹ We must see that the Spirit’s work of illumination and revelation are intrinsically tied to his revealing Christ as the “image of the invisible God,” bringing the world to a saving knowledge of the truth of Christ’s person and work through an understanding of God’s revelation in Scripture.²⁰⁰ Without an object to reveal and illuminate to us, specifically Christ and the Word of God, the Spirit “blows where He wills” as an indiscernible, mysterious, independent, detached agent that would be totally ineffective, unidentifiable, and unhelpful to the world.

We must conclude this about the Spirit’s role in inspiration: the Spirit of God is shown in Scripture to only bring new revelation from God *that is intrinsically linked to and a continuation of either what was revealed in the person of Christ or in the inspired*

coming into the hearts of all believers, in the church of the Son, in the temple of the Holy Spirit.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 321-2.

¹⁹⁸ Bernd Oberdorfer, “The Holy Spirit – A Person? Reflection of the Spirit’s Trinitarian Identity,” in *The Work of the Spirit*, 38, 43. Congar says, “The church fathers affirmed again and again that, just as the Son revealed the Father, the Spirit reveals the Son.” Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:103. Gordon Fee actually says, “Thus it is fair to say with some that Paul’s doctrine of the Spirit is Christ-Centered, in the same sense that Christ and his work help define the Spirit and his work in the Christian life.” See Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 32.

¹⁹⁹ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 309.

²⁰⁰ McDermott and Netland remind us that “evangelicals, in line with the witness of Scripture, insist the God has indeed revealed himself in an authoritative manner to us in the incarnation and the written Scripture.” See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 87. Miles also concludes that “Yong rightly wants to emphasize the present role of the Holy Spirit in the process of illumination and interpretation. But blurring illumination and interpretation effectively severs inspiration from its historical roots, which leads to an impoverished doctrine of Scripture.” See Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 270.

*Word of God.*²⁰¹ McDermott helpfully says, “Christ is our norm for understanding God, but He is not a static norm; the norm (our understanding of Christ) is transformed and enriched by the guidance/declaring/judging function of the Holy Spirit.”²⁰² And since it is the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures, then we must ask, “What was the Spirit interested in making the center of Scripture?” Here, Miles reminds us that Jesus Christ is the center of biblical theology and that, as redemptive history itself, Scripture points to the importance of the work of the Father through the Son that is now revealed to the world through the Spirit.²⁰³ We must say that Yong’s idea about the continued revelation of the Spirit can only be affirmed if we say that this continued revelation is directly in line with the revelation of the person of Christ or the Word of God itself.²⁰⁴ But if the Spirit is doing something “new,” then the burden once again falls on the question of “what are the discerning principles of the Spirit’s revelations and what is just our own manmade concoctions?” Let me conclude this thought with a lengthy quote from Karl Barth:

We must now add at once that the Spirit is the element of revelation which is different from Christ as the exalted Lord, while He is revelation to the extent that it becomes an event on us and in us, nevertheless He is still to be regarded whole and entirely as the Spirit of Christ, of the Son, of the Word of God. He is not to be regarded, then, as a revelation of

²⁰¹ As D’Costa says, “Christ is wholly God but not all of God.” As cited in Gerald R. McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions? Jesus, Revelation & Religious Traditions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 95.

²⁰² McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions?*, 95.

²⁰³ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 264, 276.

²⁰⁴ Newbigin reminds us that it is the Spirit’s work to lead us into “all truth,” meaning that there will be revelation that was not initially given by Christ. Yet, this does not mean that we will be led beyond or away from Jesus. See Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 178-9. Again, just as there is a distinction in persons who are still inseparable, there may be distinctions in revelation that is yet inseparable.

*independent content, as a new instruction, illumination and stimulation of man that goes beyond Christ, beyond the Word, but in every sense as the instruction, illumination and stimulation of man through the Word and for the Word.*²⁰⁵

As we said above, the Spirit is able to reveal and illuminate the words and truth of Christ to us through His indwelling presence. This leads us to the second thing we must seek to understand about the Spirit of God – the extent and result of His inhabitation and indwelling in man. With Yong we affirm that on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out from God on those who were in Jerusalem, but it is difficult to believe that the Spirit was universally poured out at that time, as Yong suggests. For although Peter quotes the text from Joel that anticipates the eschatological universal gift of the Spirit on all mankind, it seems that Yong falls captive to an over-realized eschatology by suggesting that at this event all mankind was given the Spirit.²⁰⁶ We know that when Christ comes again, the Spirit's task will be to bring all of mankind before the throne of God in worship and confession of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, but to suggest that the Spirit is already doing this in non-believers is to wave the banner of universalism.²⁰⁷ We know that a proper understanding of the work of the Spirit is that of a “down-payment” of our guaranteed future hope. Because we affirm the orthodox teaching that “there is no salvation or communion with God apart from the Holy Spirit,” we cannot say that the Spirit has accomplished more than this “down-payment” already or, again, we run the

²⁰⁵ As cited in Coffey, “Did you Receive the Spirit When You First Believed?”, 89.

²⁰⁶ Newbigin says, “The Spirit is a real presence of love, joy, and peace that belong to God's perfect reign, but it is not yet the fullness of these things.” Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 62.

²⁰⁷ See Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 114.

risk of becoming pluralists or universalists.²⁰⁸ Although Yong would also affirm this teaching (his whole proposal rests on this truth!), we must say his conclusion that the Spirit can mediate the salvation of Christ apart from any Christological criteria is a misunderstanding of the person and work of the Spirit.²⁰⁹ For, as Van Gelder helpfully says, “On the day of Pentecost,... the spiritual temple of God was being filled with the Spirit... The Spirit was creating the church.”²¹⁰

Emery reminds us that at the Pentecost, we saw all the visible missions of the Spirit.²¹¹ First, according to Emery, we discover there the Holy Spirit in person, sent and given by the Father and the Son. Second, we discern there the new presence of the Holy Spirit by grace with which he fills the apostles and inspires their ministry of founding the church. And third, we see the manifestation of the Spirit through a sensible sign, namely the tongues of fire that symbolize the life-giving breath of God.²¹² He is able to say this precisely because of what the mission of the Spirit accomplishes by his indwelling; specifically, sanctification.²¹³ The indwelling of the Spirit causes the internal change in the person for the execution of good and moral aptitude through the accompaniment of the indwelling of the Father and Son, doing this primarily through our union with Christ, the adoption that we thus receive from that, and through the progressive sanctification of

²⁰⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 259.

²⁰⁹ Wilkins says, “only the Church in which the Holy Spirit is present can effectively mediate the Christ’s saving power,” but qualifies it by saying that this mediated salvation by the Spirit comes from hearing the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. See Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?”, 46.

²¹⁰ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000) 104.

²¹¹ Tennent says that “Luke portrays the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as another kind of divine invasion, as an extension of the Incarnation through the abiding and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 411. Part of this visible mission is the in-breaking of the “end times.” See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 58.

²¹² Emery, *The Trinity*, 183.

²¹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 311.

our lives by showing the fruit of this internal change.²¹⁴ We can agree with Yong that the Spirit produces the fruits from Galatians 5, but we must see that these fruits are what they are because they are associated with what it means to live in the *imago Dei*, of whom Christ is our perfect model. Thus, the fruits of the Spirit can interchangeably be called the fruits of the Son because they are the result of living the way originally intended for man to live before the fall, the way that Christ lived during his life on earth.²¹⁵

I think Ware says it best in this quote: “Not only does the Spirit reveal and inspire the word of Christ, and empower the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, and regenerate sinners to behold the beauty of Christ and lead us to place our hope and faith in Christ, the Spirit also works mightily in us to conform us more and more into the likeness of Christ.”²¹⁶ Actually, the indwelling of the Spirit is what allows us to participate in the life of the Trinity, receiving that divine gift of Love that has been eternally shared among the persons of the Trinity.²¹⁷ Again, we must see that Yong would not inherently disagree with this, since, for Yong, the presence of the Spirit necessarily means the presence of the Son. Primarily, the presence of the Spirit must be seen as a Gift of grace, but what is deemed the fruit of this grace may keep us from determining, as Yong does, that Christological proclamation is unnecessary.

²¹⁴ See Wilkins, “Why Two Divine Missions?”, 46, 53, 55; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 257. This stems from the holiness of the Holy Spirit that ties us to the holiness of the Father that is produced in the Son and made available to us through the indwelling of the Spirit. See Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 117-8; Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:107-8.

²¹⁵ Miles reminds us that pneumatological inclusivists are quick to stress the universal presence of the Spirit of God when God breathed life into man, making him in the *imago Dei*. However, he also helpfully says that they stress the activity of the Spirit in that act, forgetting that the act of creation was a joint act of the Trinity, not a solo act of the Spirit. He also points to Jesus as “the image of the invisible God” and “the image of perfected humanity.” He says, “Humanity was created *imago Dei* so that the redemptive purposes of God could be accomplished in Christ.” See Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 283-5.

²¹⁶ Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 122. See also Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 77.

²¹⁷ See Emery, *The Trinity*, 81; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 312; Coffey, “Did Your Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?” 61.

Lonergan's thesis, as determined by Fortman, can be stated as "the inhabitation of the divine persons, although it rather consists and is cognized in acts, is nonetheless constituted by the state of grace."²¹⁸ What we must stress here is that although this state of grace that begins the process of sanctification and salvation in one's life is an act of the Spirit alone, the processes of progressive sanctification, regeneration, repentance, and even faith, all of which are works of the Spirit under His mission, involve some sort of human participation, action, and response. It also involves a complete participation of the Trinity, as we stated as necessary above, meaning that someone saved by faith through grace, without a proper object of that faith and grace, has no real biblically defined faith at all. Someone with faith must place that faith in something, and the something will determine the outworking of the faith. Thus, faith in Christ, even if it is attributed to someone through the Spirit, *must* work itself out Christologically, and this would not happen without a Christological understanding of the Spirit's work in one's life.

Again, we know that the Spirit cannot be an independently working agent. If He is in fact sent by the Son, or even by the Father alone under the same intended will as that of the Son, then by producing faith in those whom He indwells, He must point them to the object of that faith. If he does work independently, the object of faith could be himself, but since he does not, it must be someone else. And if the object of faith is in God the Father, the sender of the Spirit, then the faith that is produced must be in what

²¹⁸ Fortman, *The Triune God*, 311. Lonergan sums up this thought by saying, "For the glory of the Father is this, that just as he eternally speaks the Word in truth and through the Word breaths forth love in holiness, so also in fullness of time he sent his incarnate Son in truth so that by believing the Word we might speak and understand true inner words; and through the Word he sent the Spirit of the Word in holiness so that joined to the Spirit in love and made members of the body of Christ we might cry out, 'Abba, Father!'" See Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:520-1. Also see Lonergan, *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 12:517 for a good explanation of the participation of both the Trinity and of man in this process.

the Father has provided for the salvation of His people. Suggesting that people are saved on “faith” that is based on the redemptive work of Jesus, without a knowledge of Jesus or what He has done, or through works that are ascribed to the Spirit, is just a disguised proposition of universalism and does not refer to a biblical understanding of faith that includes belief, trust, and obedience.²¹⁹ It may seem loving and nice to suggest that the work of the Spirit keeps many living in darkness from missing out on the redemption that Christ has offered, but it should be quite obvious that we have now crossed the line into universal salvation for all apart from inherent faith in Christ. By doing that we naturally ignore the many mandates of Scripture for the church to go and make disciples of all nations.

Robert Doran’s wisdom is helpful at this point explaining that since the gift of God is also the mission of the Holy Spirit, “two things must be considered in the one to whom the mission happens: indwelling by grace and something new brought through grace.”²²⁰ Yes, there is a very real experience of grace that is our hope for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), but the fundamental reality of regeneration, conversion, faith, repentance, sanctification, and even salvation is “something new brought through grace.”²²¹ This is

²¹⁹ Newbigin says that non-Christian religions “represent goals and methods too foreign to Christ for there to be any direct line of continuity.” As cited in McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?*, 91.

²²⁰ Further, he says that, since the eternal procession dictates the mission, then “charity is our created participation in the Holy Spirit, a change in us that proceeds from sanctifying grace in a manner that is analogous to the process of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son and that grounds a created relation to the uncreated Father in hope and to the uncreated Son in companionship. See Robert Doran, *The Trinity in History: A Theology of Divine Missions* (vol. 1; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) 30.

²²¹ These are what Bavinck says the Holy Spirit is the “subjective principle” of. See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 312. Millard Erickson adds “teaching, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, empowering, and revealing” to the activities of the Spirit. See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 878, 888. Finally, Ewell says, “In the New Testament we see that the work of the Holy Spirit is to empower God’s people for the sake of evangelism, for the sake of the world, so that the world

the new creation or regeneration that Paul discusses as the work of the Spirit in our lives. Yong would agree with this, saying that the “something new” is the fruits of the Spirit in which those of other religions can experience and share with us; however, to suggest that the Spirit’s production of these fruits in other religions would produce an inherent faith in the one with whom these fruits are to unify us is quite the stretch and perhaps borders the “anonymous Christian” idea of Karl Rahner which has been abandoned by most, including Yong. It also suggests a type of “works righteousness” that has been argued against heavily since the time of the reformation. The fruits of the Spirit that are produced by His indwelling presence are not ends in themselves, but, tied with the gifts and actions that the Spirit is characterized with teaching us, we know that there is a much greater end.²²² And this end, bringing us back to our earlier discussion, is the purpose of the divine missions - the restoration of humanity with their creator, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God under the reign of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

This is fundamentally why we cannot affirm Yong’s claim of the universal indwelling of the Spirit in all of humanity on the basis of the Pentecost event. This is not to say that I do not believe that the Spirit can be working in other religions (as I will discuss later in this paper); it is merely to say that if the Spirit that was sent during Pentecost with the mission that we have discussed above is to be found in all of humanity, then we would expect that the grace of God accompanying the Spirit would produce faith, repentance, regeneration, and conversion in the hearts of the entire

might know God.” C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, “Missio Dei: The Theological Roots of Evangelism,” in *International Review of Mission*. 101/2 (World Council of Churches, 2012) 386.

²²² Fee says, “The essential nature of the fruit is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the believer.” See Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 114.

world.²²³ Even in Jesus' teaching we see a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating persons to the Christian life. For as Millard Erickson says, "The good and holy quality of the Spirit becomes clearer yet in light of the work he does and its results. He is described as producing the fear of the Lord and various qualities of righteousness and judgement in the promised Messiah. When the Spirit is poured out, the result is justice, righteousness, and peace. Devotion to the Lord results from outpouring of the Spirit."²²⁴ Congar helpfully adds, "The Spirit, then, is the principle realizing the 'Christian mystery,' which is 'the mystery of the Son of God who was made man and who enables us to be born as sons of God.'"²²⁵ When the Spirit indwells us, it leads to the realization that "it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Similarly, J.I. Packer says that "the role of the Spirit is to mediate the presence of Jesus."²²⁶ Ware shows this connection in what he determines as four aspects of the Spirit's work.²²⁷ First, the Spirit inspires special revelation that is focused on Christ. Yong claims that the revelation that the Spirit inspires is free of Christological content as to not be exclusive, but, as we saw above, there is a direct tie between the Word of God and the Spirit, especially as we see it in Scripture. Second, the Spirit empowers evangelism which proclaims the Gospel of Christ. Inclusivism attempts to separate the work of the Son and the Spirit, but Scripture shows us, especially in the oft mentioned work of the disciples in the book of Acts, that the indwelling Spirit produces a desire to

²²³ Fee actually describes that Spirit as "the identity marker of the converted." See Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 88-9.

²²⁴ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 884-5.

²²⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:68.

²²⁶ As cited in Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 107. Coffey reiterates this, saying, "The Spirit's role is the presence of Christ in a believer once He is gone." Coffey, *"Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?"*, 83.

²²⁷ See Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 108-122.

share the redemptive work of Christ with those who need to hear it.²²⁸ Third, the Spirit brings about regeneration that produces new life in Christ. And fourth, the Spirit progressively achieves sanctification in our lives with the goal of becoming more and more like Christ. In all these things we see that the work that the indwelling of the Spirit accomplishes results in a Christological understanding and reorientation of the entirety of one's life. Lesslie Newbigin realizes that "to be in Christ is to share in His anointing, to have that Spirit by whom the word was made flesh and by whom the incarnate Word was anointed that He might fulfil the mission for which he was sent; it is to have 'an anointing from the Holy One.'"²²⁹

Another purpose of the Spirit that is important in the context of our discussion is that of convicting the world of sin, as told by Jesus in John 16:8. Congar says, "The action of the Paraclete consists in urging the world to recognize its fault and confess its guilt."²³⁰ He continues, "The Holy Spirit acts within us or he penetrates into us like an anointing. He makes us, at a level that is deeper than that of mere regret for some fault, conscious of the sovereign attraction of the Absolute, the Pure and the True, and of the new life offered to us by the Lord, and he also gives us a clear consciousness of our own wretchedness and of the untruth and selfishness that fills our lives."²³¹ We must see, then, that part of the work of the indwelling of the Spirit involves our conviction of sin that reorients our hearts and lives towards the will of God, that is emulated and seen in the life of Jesus. It seems hard to believe that the Spirit would be working in someone's heart to

²²⁸ Many Pentecostals use the book of Acts at their framework for pneumatological inclusivism, but it is very important to see that any Spirit-led event is followed up with a proclamation of Jesus Christ.

²²⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008).

²³⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:122.

²³¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:123.

convict them of sin while allowing them to still worship another God, unless we once again abandon orthodox thought and believe in the universalist “all roads go to heaven” idea or a pluralism that says “all gods are the same.” A conviction of sin begins to reorient one to the will of God and, thus, to a proper understanding and worship of the Triune God.

Before we can draw any final conclusions, we must discuss one last large area where the mission of the Spirit is clearly seen as being of utmost importance - eschatology. In line with Yong’s claim of what took place at Pentecost, we can affirm that the mission of the Holy Spirit is oriented toward God’s eschatological promise as the “presence of the foretaste of the kingdom”, because “the Holy Spirit enables us to enter and participate in the kingdom of God.”²³² Kärkkäinen says, “The Holy Spirit mediates the eschatological future to us as the church lives between the history of Jesus and the anticipation of the coming of the kingdom; the Spirit serves the coming of the Kingdom of the Son.”²³³ And as the Kingdom of the Son, the one in which He begins His ministry calling people to become aware of, the Spirit’s involvement in the Kingdom of God must continue to be in line with that of what the Son accomplished before Him. The “already” character of the Kingdom was initiated by Christ and continues through the divine presence of the Spirit, whereas the “not yet” character is what the Spirit anticipates and

²³² Amos Yong, “Pluralism, Secularism, and Pentecost: Newbegin-ings for Missio Trinitatis in a new Century,” in *The Gospel and Pluralism Today: Reassessing Lesslie Newbigin in the 21st Century* (Edited by Amos Yong and Scott W. Sunquist; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015) 150, 155. Tennent adds, “The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the ‘not yet’ of the kingdom into the ‘already’ of our fallen world.” Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 179. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:70. Tennent adds, “The Holy Spirit enables and empowers the church to extend God’s mission into the world.” Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 491.

²³³ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 131. Newbigin adds, “It is thus in virtue of having received the Spirit that we are living in the new age, and that the powers of the age to come work in us.” Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 90.

begins to initiate in the lives of those whom he indwells.²³⁴ In other words, “as the Spirit works in believers in Christ, He is moving the Christian toward what the believer shall one day be perfectly.”²³⁵

Although lengthy, I believe that the following quote from Todd Miles supports my position. He says:

*The Holy Spirit is the one who heralds the coming of the future world which is ruled by (the) Messiah, the Spirit-anointed one. It is the Spirit who inaugurates that age. The Holy Spirit is also the source of the future new life. The Spirit becomes characteristic of the eschatological state itself. In that age the sending of the Spirit is explicitly designated not of the Messiah but from God, although the statements occur in prophecies that speak of the Messiah. In Rabbinic theology, the role of the Messiah with respect to the Spirit is broadened. He is not merely the Spirit-anointed one, but the one who through the Spirit will be communicated to others. The Messiah pours out on people the Spirit of grace so that henceforth they walk in the ways of God.*²³⁶

²³⁴ See Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 33. Fee adds, “The role of the Spirit is on earth, indwelling believers in order to help them in the weakness of their present ‘already/not yet’ existence and thereby to intercede on their behalf.” Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, 33.

²³⁵ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 325. Fee adds, “In saving us through Christ and the Spirit, God has created an eschatological people, who live the life of the future in the present, a life reflecting the character of God who became present first in Christ and then by his Spirit.” See Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 99.

²³⁶ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings*, 299-300.

Here we see the intrinsic tie between the eschatological nature of the Spirit and that of the Son. Yong, as well as others that we have discussed above, wants to say that the Spirit may be bringing about new revelations of God that are separate from Christological criteria, and is acting in a way that is distinct from the Son, removing the necessity of the Christological criteria for missiology. However, Sinclair Ferguson helpfully reminds us that the revelation of the Spirit also has a partial character “which will reach its fullness only in the Messiah, and therefore in the inner and widespread experience of the Spirit.” He continues, “Only through the revelation of the Spirit in the Messiah does the enigmatic testimony of the Old Testament come into its true light, so that the Spirit’s activity is seen to have been more than merely an extension of the presence of God.”²³⁷ Thus, as we stated above, the revelation and the work of the Spirit reach their fullness of understanding when the framework for discernment is set firmly on Jesus Christ, the Spirit-anointed as the partial character of Christ’s revelation is illuminated to us through the work of the Spirit.

And it is this eschatological work of the Spirit in beginning the work of the Kingdom which most fully reveals the nature and mission of the Church. If nothing else, we must see that the work of the Spirit is what makes the church what it is and what it does.²³⁸ And if this is the case, then the work of the Spirit must somehow “create” the Church, which must be the fellowship of those saved by the atoning work of Christ, for the glory of God. Johnson helpfully says, “The Spirit, who is sent into the world by the Father and the Son, bears witness to the Son by preparing the way for and empowering

²³⁷ As cited in Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 313.

²³⁸ Van Gelder says that the Church “does what it is,” showing that the nature of the church is defined by the mission of God, a result of the redemptive work of Christ, holistic in relating this redemption to all life, etc. See Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 128.

the witness of the church regarding the person and work of Christ.”²³⁹ Thus, if the Spirit creates the church, and the church is meant to be the body of Christ, a people set apart to be the community of faith filled with the power and presence of God, for the purpose of bringing those from every tribe, nation, and tongue to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, then we must see that there must be Christological fruit and understanding that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁰

Churches are meant to be missional communities created, led, empowered, and sustained by the Holy Spirit, “in whom (humanity) can be enlightened by faith and return to (God) in worship and love as the first fruits of a new creation.”²⁴¹ Guder continues, “Through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, these social processes exhibit the incarnation of divine activity within human activity...”²⁴² Finally, Newbigin sums it up well, “Thus the meaning and purpose of this present time, between Christ’s coming and His coming again, is that in it the Church is to prosecute its apostolic mission of witness to the world.”²⁴³ We must understand this: The Spirit’s purpose in the indwelling of the

²³⁹ Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism*, 194. Newbigin says that “the nature of the Church... cannot be understood rightly except in a perspective which is at once missionary and eschatological...” Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 25.

²⁴⁰ See Can Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 32. See also Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 173. Congar adds, “The Church, then, is historical and visible and its ‘founder’ is Jesus, who is always living and active in it and is its lasting foundation. The Spirit gives life to the church and enables it to grow as the body of Christ.” Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:11. Yong, again, thinks that religions will have a future redemption in them, but without the Christological criteria that serves as the object of this redemption, this seems unlikely. In the end, religions *may be redeemed* as they see Christ as the fulfillment of their spiritual longing, but they will not be redeemed without this Christological knowledge.

²⁴¹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 142, 145. Congar quotes Romans 8:14 which says, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Thus the fruits of the Spirit in a person’s life must be that of an adopted Son of God. See Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:138.

²⁴² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:180.

²⁴³ Here he cites the Acts 1:8, saying that the power of the Holy Spirit was supposed to be for the purpose of being witnesses to the entirety of the world. See Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 138. Fee also shows that hearing the good news of the gospel is tied to the coming of the Kingdom, and the response is repentance as “humility and total dependency on God.” See Gordon D. Fee, “The Kingdom of God and the

Church is to begin to create the eschatological people of God who would implement the works of the Kingdom of God, while being witnesses to the Lord of all who will return to rule the world once and for all, bringing all to their knees in recognition of who He is. If the Spirit is working *this way* in other religions, then we would expect to see this same fruit, which we can affirm is not the case.

Summary

Let me conclude this section by first affirming, along with Yong and many discussed above, that the Spirit does in fact act outside of the Church. Kärkkäinen says, “The Holy Spirit was sent to the people of God, but this people exists for the sake of the world. The Holy Spirit was sent to the whole world to bring about new creation, and the Spirit’s action in the church is subordinate to this goal.”²⁴⁴ The Spirit is indeed working in those outside of the Church, preparing them for the Gospel and the Church in the midst of the nations, but we must see that the work of the Spirit in these peoples is inherently different from His work in the Church. If this is false, then we must conclude that the Spirit universally works salvation in the whole world. Let us summarize what was said above to confirm that the Spirit does not in fact universally work salvation.

First, the Spirit’s work in revealing the will and purposes of God in those who He indwells seems to either be contained to the community of faith, or it is somehow limited or ineffectual in those of other religions. For the Spirit’s task of illumination and

Church’s Global Mission,” in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishing, 1991) 13.

²⁴⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 157. He quotes Comblin who says, “Now the Spirit has been acting in pagan peoples and in all religions since humanity began. The Spirit leads peoples and religions in directions we cannot know in advance. All we can do is observe the signs of the Spirit at work and go along with it...” As cited in Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 158.

revelation to fully have its effect, it must result in a faith-producing understanding of Christ and His atoning sacrifice. Second, if the indwelling of the Spirit is the power and presence of God for the re-creation of a person to accomplish the will of God, then we must see that it creates a people whose minds are reoriented towards the salvation of all people through the knowledge of, and faith in, the saving blood of Jesus. If the Spirit is indwelling people of other religions in this way, then we would expect a re-orientation of their lives towards the will of the triune God as made manifest in the life and actions of Jesus. Third, if the Spirit is the one who creates the eschatological people of God who are now involved in the Kingdom of God, then we can assume the fruit of their lives would be oriented toward the same Kingdom of God that was expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The fruit of their faithful living should prepare for the return of the risen King, meaning that that they would have a knowledge and belief in Christological criteria. Last, “the presence of the Spirit is the principle of ecclesial communion... by giving faith, charity, and filial adoption.”²⁴⁵ All who experience the indwelling of the Spirit must be unified in the same faith, sonship, and mission that is produced. If those of other religions were filled with this same Spirit, then they would share in our object of faith, mission, and familial unity, but this does not seem to be the case.

To reiterate, we agree with Marshall who says, “The problem, it seems, is that positing a numerical difference of action between Christ and the Holy Spirit would

²⁴⁵ Emery, *The Trinity*, 40. Fee says, “‘to be saved’ in the Pauline view means to become part of the *people* of God, who by the Spirit are born into God’s *family* and therefore joined to one another as one *body*, whose gatherings in the Spirit form them into God’s temple.” Elsewhere he says, “There is no salvation outside the church, because God is saving a *people* for his name, not a miscellaneous, unconnected set of individuals.” Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*, 72, 64.

multiply the divine essence and so destroy the unity of God. If Christ and the Spirit are to be one God, they have to have, and undertake, one action – an action that is numerically, and not just qualitatively, the same for each. What we want, as Thomas (Aquinas) put it elsewhere..., is ‘not to distinguish the action, but the persons.’”²⁴⁶ Similarly, Miles asserts, “To emphasize the role of the Spirit to the detriment of the Son is to misunderstand the role of the Spirit, ignore biblical teaching, distort redemptive history, silence the gospel, and pervert eschatological promises.”²⁴⁷ My fear is that Yong, in his attempt to allow salvation and inclusion into the community of faith to be less “triumphalistic, arrogant, or exclusive” through the “relative, yet distinct” work of the Spirit apart from Christological criteria has actually resulted in a misunderstanding of the person and work of the Spirit in his relation to Christ, as seen in the arguments above. But what does all this ultimately mean for our engagement with other religions and the way in which the Spirit may be actually working in them? The answer to this question will finally conclude our paper.

²⁴⁶ Marshall, “What Does the Spirit Have to Do?”, 69. Later he says, “Theologians who worry about a ‘pneumatological deficit’ in Western theology tend not to offer a merely verbal solution to this problem, but no solution at all. Their characteristic pattern is rather to take the actions of the Father, Son, and Spirit as three distinct deeds, which are the same only in kind, or generically, and not in number. Its advocates sometimes seem to count this as needed Trinitarian or pneumatological boldness; why it should not also be counted as tritheism is usually less clear.” Marshall, “What Does the Spirit Have to Do?”, 72. McDonnell adds, “The health of Pneumatology is in Trinity and in the Trinitarian movement, where the latter is understood as the whole complex activity whereby the Father brings forth the Son and the Holy Spirit and they return to him.” As cited in Coffey, “*Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*”, 44.

²⁴⁷ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 327.

Chapter 6

A Revised Pneumatological Theology of Religions

As Millard Erickson explains in his *Christian Theology*, we can affirm Dr. Yong's desire to study the Holy Spirit, since "we live in the period in which the Holy Spirit's work is more prominent than that of the other members of the Trinity."²⁴⁸ Just because an idea or proposal is "unorthodox" or new, we cannot automatically discard or dismiss it, for we know that God's Spirit works regularly in new and exciting ways. However, we must make sure that any new way in which we think the Spirit may be working follows the way that the Spirit has worked in history, Scripture, and in our understanding of the immanent Trinity. Our hope in the section above was to determine if Yong's proposal stood up to biblical and theological scrutiny. We must now discuss what our findings mean for a proper understanding of the Spirit's work in an Evangelical theology of religions.

As we stated above, we agree with Yong that the Spirit is at work in other religions, and exists for the sake of the world. But we must remember that, like the affirmation of Jesus' universal Lordship, an affirmation of the Spirit's presence in other

²⁴⁸ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 863. Tennent adds that "theological reflection in the West gradually became dominated by a range of theological systems that denied that the full exercise of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit was a normative, much less essential, part of the church's *ongoing* life and witness in the world." Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 418.

religions, does not require the conclusion that other religions experience salvation or are part of the Church. “Christ died for all” can be proclaimed without meaning that all have received the benefits of His death; the same is true for the universal divine presence of God through the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹ So then how do we explain the way the Spirit works outside of the Church?

I find Frederick Crowe’s explanation rather intriguing. Under his view of seeing the Son as participating in the work of the Spirit, Crowe says that the Spirit imposes a “self-restraint” in the hearts of those whom He indwells in differing measures. He calls it the *epochê* of the Spirit as the counterpart of the *kenôsis* of the Son.²⁵⁰ He says that this makes sense since,

After all, the Spirit present in our hearts still allows us to form the most preposterous ideas, to commit the most abominable deeds; there surely is some self-restraint, some self-imposed limitation, on the Spirit’s reign over our hearts. I would see this self-restraint as being exercised in different degrees, as being removed step by step in the stages of history. Thus, it would be at its greatest degree of severity when the Spirit dwelt anonymously for long ages in our hearts. There would be a great release from self-restraint at Pentecost, after God’s avowal of the divine Love in

²⁴⁹ See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 38. Newbigin helpfully says, “The revelation of God’s saving love and power in Jesus entitles and requires me to believe that God purposes the salvation of all men, but it does not entitle me to believe that this purpose is to be accomplished in any way that ignores or bypasses the historic event by which it was in fact revealed and effected.” Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 177.

²⁵⁰ Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 332; Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tension in Divine Missions,” 165.

*the only Son. There will be a complete release in our final state, when we will know as we are known and enjoy the full reign of the Spirit over all our conduct.*²⁵¹

This assertion would explain how the Spirit could be universally present without causing universal salvation, or without saying that the Spirit's presence, by itself, is ineffectual in producing salvation. He states, then, that there are not "anonymous Christians" in the world, but that all are "anonymous Spiritans," all receiving the Spirit in different measures as God allows.²⁵² He later goes on to say that this is the slower, more methodical approach taken by God to reveal himself to the world but is one way in which He could do so.²⁵³ But the most important statement in this proposal is this: "this partial moment calls for its completion: the need of the world religions to hear the gospel message is the same need still that the world had when God sent the only Son to be its way and truth and life."²⁵⁴ This proposal differs with Yong's slightly, since the Spirit would not have been universally poured out at Pentecost, but only "made more manifest" at this time.

²⁵¹ Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 332-3.

²⁵² Crowe, "Son and Spirit: Tension in the Divine Missions," 163.

²⁵³ "God speaks in the divine silence as well as in the uttered word, and the message of this long silence is the message of the slow and methodical God." Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 340. Coffey adds a lot to this when he says, "the nonbeliever today is brought to explicit faith and to union with Christ through the Church's ministry of the Word... But another possibility, which very often is a reality, is that the objective coming to Christ and the subjective bringing of the Spirit fail to meet, because for whatever reason the non-believer is not existentially challenged by the Church's ministry of the Word." It is at those moments which the preparation that is made by the Spirit must be united with its fullness in an understanding of Christ. See Coffey, "Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?", 87-91.

²⁵⁴ Crowe and Vertin, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, 326.

I do not mention Crowe's proposal here as a wholesale affirmation, nor do we have the space in this paper to unpack the implications of this proposal at length, we must consider it as we continue this discussion about how the Spirit works in other religions.²⁵⁵ Whether we accept Crowe's proposal of a "self-restraint" in the indwelling of the Spirit, we *must* affirm that not every religious experience is of divine origin.²⁵⁶ The Spirit cannot be producing fruit in one's life that goes against, or is hostile to, the intended goal of glorifying God. This is exactly what Jesus is addressing when he says to his accusers in Mark 3:24, "...a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." Again, since we are not universalists, we must affirm that there are those against the will of God and thus outside of His salvation. And if that is the case, then religious experience alone cannot be the work of the Spirit if it does not lead in the direction of understanding Jesus Christ.

This brings us immediately to the question of discernment and the criteria required to determine the work of the Spirit in other religions. There must be some criteria to transcend particular religious contexts or we will naturally fall into relativism.²⁵⁷ Most pneumatological inclusivists identify the activity of the Spirit in the ethical realm by pointing to the fruits of the Spirit or "Godly living." But, as we saw above, Scripture (1 John 4:1-6) clearly declares that any alleged experience with the

²⁵⁵ I wonder, in this vein, if there is not a difference in the indwelling of the Spirit and the general work of the Spirit by God in the world. This would allow for the Spirit to work in other religions without having to explain why those in whom the Spirit works do not experience the same regeneration that those who experience the Spirit's indwelling do. Nonetheless, it is important to say here that I am not endorsing this position, since Crowe himself would disagree with my conclusion. I am merely using it as an example of how Yong might revise his proposal to be better received.

²⁵⁶ Erickson says, "Not every exceptional religious experience can be of divine origin, unless God is a very broadly ecumenical and tolerant being, who even grants special manifestations of His Spirit to some who make no claim to Christian faith and may actually be opposed to it. Certainly if demonic forces could produce imitations of divine miracles in biblical times, the same may be true today as well." See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 896.

²⁵⁷ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 290.

Spirit that denies the humanity or deity of Christ is not an experience with the Spirit of God. “Glorification of the Son involves the proclamation of the gospel and lordship of the person of Christ.”²⁵⁸ With this in mind, along with the discussion of John 14-16 above, we must see that the Spirit’s work in a person must bring the fruitfulness of the Gospel as seen in the life, ministry, and atoning death of Christ. If the Spirit is working in the hearts of those of other religious traditions, and even if it *is* evidenced through ethical criteria, it can only be confirmed as the work of the Spirit of God if He is in fact fulfilling His divine Christ-glorifying mission.²⁵⁹

Kärkkäinen writes, “speaking of the universal presence of the Spirit integrally related to the particularity of Jesus and his cross helps us to qualify and critique the mantra according to which the Spirit represents universality whereas the Son stands for particularity.”²⁶⁰ He also says that the work of the Spirit must be tied to the kingdom of the Son, as we discussed above.²⁶¹ And it is *this* reason alone, the intrinsic link to Christ that comes with the presence of the Spirit, that allows us to say that salvation is brought about by the Spirit. Kärkkäinen says, “Wherever the Spirit inspires the knowledge of God, be it within the sphere of the church or outside, salvation brought about by the Spirit

²⁵⁸ Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 318.

²⁵⁹ This includes the potentiality of there being Truth in other religious traditions. If there is Truth in other religious traditions, it is only as such when compared to the revealed Word of God in both Scripture and in the life and ministry of Jesus. See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 198. Miles also reminds us of the recent testimony of dreams and visions among Muslims, pointing them to Christ or Scripture, as the work of the Spirit in preparing people’s hearts for the gospel message. Again, the Spirit is involved here *only in that* He reveals the Word of God, again in both the Scripture and the Son. Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 335.

²⁶⁰ Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 62-3.

²⁶¹ Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 65. Tennent adds, “For Christians, salvation is far more than the doctrine of justification. Salvation involves becoming full participants in the New Creation, which is already breaking into the present order.” Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 223.

is referred to the saving work of Christ, his incarnation, death, and resurrection.”²⁶² It does not deny the universal work of the Spirit, but more readily answers the question, “whose Spirit?” Without the Christological criteria for the discernment of the Spirit, we can no longer appropriately discuss the Spirit of the Trinity, but a disjointed, independent agent who is working according to his own will and purpose. We are not limiting the Spirit’s ability to “blow where He wishes” but are attempting to explain and discern whose Spirit is the one accomplishing this work all over the world. The Christological criteria brings particularity to the universality of the Spirit.²⁶³

And this understanding of Christological discernment begins to guide us to a proper foundation for a theology of religions. For as Vanhoozer reminds us, “If the Spirit’s activity were literally universal, we would not be able to distinguish the divine from the demonic.”²⁶⁴ This is an issue that Yong admits he faces. There is a very real “Object” to which the Spirit has come to reveal; namely God as manifest in the Trinity. Kärkkäinen says, “The discernment of the activity of the Holy Spirit within other religions must also bring the church more truthfully into the presence of the triune God.”²⁶⁵ For we must understand that to talk of the God who the Spirit reveals, we must see that it is none other than the Christian God, the Trinity, and to know Him is to experience His self-revelation in Christ.²⁶⁶ If we are to talk about the living God of the

²⁶² Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 61. He continues, “As Dupuis says, there are not ‘two distinct channels through which God’s saving presence reaches out to people in distinct economies of salvation,’ but one.”

²⁶³ Tennent says, “In the final analysis, Christology provides the only true objective bases for evaluating truth claims, whether those claims emerge from within Christianity or in response to normative claims from other religions.” Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 218.

²⁶⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 63.

²⁶⁵ Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 67.

²⁶⁶ Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 51. D’Costa says that “the doctrine of the Trinity... allows us to name God as revealed in Jesus Christ so that our God-talk can refer analogically to

universe, the Father of the Spirit, then we must talk about Him in light of His Trinitarian nature, which involves the Father, Son, and Spirit.²⁶⁷ Again, if the Spirit produces His fruits in people, those fruits must reflect the holiness of the Father, as seen and lived out through the Son.²⁶⁸ To speak of the doctrine of God in the conversation of the Spirit's work in the world, there must involve a discussion of Jesus Christ.

This revelation of God as Trinity “allows us to be open to (interfaith) differences while at the same time minding distinctives.”²⁶⁹ In fact, noticing the differences actually takes those of other faiths seriously. As was the problem with Rahner's “anonymous Christians,” we see that claiming that other religions are brought into the Church through the anonymous work of the Spirit diminishes the glory and work of God and does not seriously understand the foundation of other religious traditions. As much as we desire to claim that the Spirit is bringing others into the Church without the explicit knowledge of Christ that results in repentance and faith, we must conclude with Vanhoozer that the Trinity as the identity of God is both exclusivistic and pluralistic.²⁷⁰

the divine mystery.” See Gavin D'Costa, “The Trinity in Interreligious Dialogues,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 573. See also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 260, 331, 333; Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 115.

²⁶⁷ Here, Barth is helpful when he says, “The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation.” A cited in Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 111. Kärkkäinen continues, “The doctrine of the Trinity is the structuring principle of Christian theology and thus of the Christian doctrine of God among other gods.” Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 114.

²⁶⁸ Vanhoozer says, “Whereas Panniker and other pluralists try to weaken the ties that bind the Spirit to the Son, a reading of the ‘expanded economy’ that takes account of the diverse relations of Father, Son, and Spirit would, I believe, configure the Spirit as the deputy of Christ rather than as an independent itinerant evangelist.” Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 66. Kärkkäinen adds, “The clue to the doctrine of the Trinity is to discern how the three Trinitarian persons come to appearance and relate to each other in the event of revelation as presented in the life and message of Jesus.” Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 124.

²⁶⁹ Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 68.

²⁷⁰ Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 70. This is a good reminder, since there are many today who think that, by tagging the Trinity to their theological discipline, they can come up with new doctrine. Just because the Trinity represents

What this means for the work of the Spirit in the world is that, like D'Costa and Kärkkäinen claim, where the Spirit's presence is, so too is the presence of the Trinity. Once again, the Spirit's work is intrinsically tied to the work of the Son, and the revelation of the Father, in whom the Son is the "image of the invisible God." Therefore we conclude that the Spirit's work in other religions must be in the preparation of the heart for the event of Jesus Christ.²⁷¹ Johnson says, "The Spirit, who is sent into the world by the Father and the Son, bears witness to the Son by preparing the way for and empowering the witness of the church regarding the person and work of Christ."²⁷² Again, holding tightly to the inseparable operations of the persons of the Trinity, we must assert that the work appropriated to the Spirit is also the work of the Son and cannot be something in which the Son has no part. For how can we know that it is the Spirit of God working in other religions if we cannot use the Son or even the Trinity to test the identity of the Spirit? In the end, if we are to speak about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Bible, the one who was poured out at Pentecost, then we must in the same breath identify Him as one who is Triune with the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of the Trinitarian God, and therefore He works inseparably and complementarily with the Father and the Son in a unified economy of salvation.²⁷³

This revelation of God as Triune in the work of the Spirit is what leads us to many of the problems with pluralism. Without the identity of God as Trinity and its

"unity within plurality," doesn't mean that we can change historical orthodoxy in regards to how we view the means by which those of other religions experience salvation just by tagging our theology of religions as "Trinitarian."

²⁷¹ See Daniel L. Migliore, "The Trinity and the Theology of Religions," in *God's Life in Trinity*, 104.

²⁷² Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 194.

²⁷³ Migliore, "The Trinity and the Theology of Religions," 105. Johnson says, "The Son and the Spirit work together in a single economy of salvation which has as its goal drawing men and women into the life of the triune God." Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 139.

implications, we have no discerning “clue” or foundation upon which to set ourselves. Pluralism also believes that Christ cannot unify humanity like it can but it unifies the world with nothing except “tolerance,” “ignorance,” and the belief in oppressive Absolute Truth. Here we must admit that even Christianity does not claim to possess Absolute Truth, only the knowledge of the one in whom it can be found.²⁷⁴ We understand that we, like all of humankind, are sojourners and exiles on this earth seeking to return to the heavenly home that we were created to long for.²⁷⁵

We must conclude, with Newbigin, that “The Holy Spirit is not domesticated within the Church, but it is through the Church, the company of those who confess Jesus as Lord, that the Spirit brings others to that confession.”²⁷⁶ This is evident in the Cornelius story in Acts 10. The Spirit may be working in the hearts of both Peter and Cornelius to reveal the truth of the Gospel, but, as Newbigin says, “It is a complete misreading of the story to conclude from it that the going of the missionary is unnecessary.”²⁷⁷ God is a missionary God whose work involves His universal presence and His universal Lordship, but the Church has been commissioned and called to be the

²⁷⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 158-63. Kärkkäinen says, “The nature of the witness of the church in such a context, rather than claiming to possess the truth, is ‘bearing the truth and witnessing to the truth.’ At the same time the church is also a seeker of the truth, even though it also has access to it in the gospel.” See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 159. McDermott and Netland say that, by dismissing absolute truth, “we are tempted to compromise our belief in the uniqueness of Christ under the pressures of religious pluralism... The one true God is replaced or distorted in the practices of the world religions.” As cited in McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 42.

²⁷⁵ This is the premise for Volf in his helpful article, based on his book *Exclusion and Embrace*. See Miroslav Volf, “A Vision of Embrace: Theological Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Conflict” in *The Ecumenical Review* 47/2 (1995).

²⁷⁶ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 168.

²⁷⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 168. This is what D’Costa means by saying that, with the presence of the Spirit comes the presence of the Church. It is not to imply that the Spirit makes others the Church by His presence, but that, when the Spirit comes and works, the Church is involved and visibly seen. Therefore, it is clear that it is the Spirit of the Son, the Lord of the Church, who is working. For more, see McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 83.

ones who participate in the Kingdom by identifying the Spirit that is moving in the world as the Spirit of Christ in whom salvation and redemption has come.

So, as we begin to formulate our own Trinitarian and Pneumatological theology of religions, we must agree with Tennent that there are some glaring issues with inclusivism.²⁷⁸ First, the inclusivist's attempt to drive a wedge between the ontological necessity of Christ's work and the epistemological response of repentance and faith cannot be sustained. The biblical data is clear: "God's universal salvific will is explicitly linked to human response."²⁷⁹ Faith is not some mystical feeling or judicial pronouncement by God that is merely internal; it is tied to belief, trust, and obedience of God, and His atoning work in Jesus Christ. Without the outworking of faith in Jesus, we are not saved, for we are saved by *grace through our faith*. Second, for the inclusivists to argue that the object of all genuine faith is implicitly Christ shifts the emphasis from a personal response to Christ to the experience of faith regardless of its object. Faith is not an objectless feeling or experience but is intrinsically tied to a relationship. Without that relationship and the fruit that stems from it, the Bible is clear that there is no real faith at all. Third, the inclusivist position unduly separates soteriology from ecclesiology. This is perhaps one of the biggest problems we face in Yong's argument. Throughout Scripture and history we see an intrinsic link between salvation and becoming a child of God, a part of the new community of those set apart for the Kingdom. We will soon explore what it means to be a part of this community, but for now it is important to see that salvation outside of the Church does not exist. Those who experience salvation and the indwelling of the Spirit, as D'Costa has said, are intrinsically grafted into the church.

²⁷⁸ See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 210-12 for this list.

²⁷⁹ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 210.

Lastly, calling those of other faiths “anonymous Christians,” or something similar, has long been regarded as an insult to those within the tradition. It might seem nice calling others Christians who are outside the Church, but “it is a latent form of triumphalism to claim that you as an outsider have a better or deeper understanding of someone else’s religious experience that trumps their own understanding of their actions and beliefs.”²⁸⁰

An Evangelical Theology of Religions

So, based on what we have said throughout this paper, we now seek to answer this question: what does a Trinitarian theology of religions look like that takes seriously the work and Person of the Holy Spirit within the diverse, yet unified life of the Trinity? To help frame our theology of religions, I will pull from Tennent’s conclusions and add to them based on what we have discussed above.²⁸¹ First, he says that an evangelical theology of religion should embrace more precise and descriptive terms while at the same time recognizing what we can learn from the performative practice of each position in the actual give-and-take of interreligious encounters. Most who are engaged in theology of religions today agree that the terms exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism need to be redefined, and I believe Tennent does well to rename exclusivism, *revelatory particularism*, stressing the need for the revelation of Scripture or Christ and the particular stress of Christ without the stigma that we are excluding anyone from that revelation.²⁸² By renaming these terms he believes that “an evangelical theology of

²⁸⁰ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 212.

²⁸¹ See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 220-6.

²⁸² Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 221.

religions should be able to embrace the positive performative qualities of each position.”²⁸³

Second, revelatory particularism should be articulated within a Trinitarian context.²⁸⁴ Again, it is vital to use the Trinity as our framework as we have seen throughout this paper. Johnson says this is imperative for four reasons. First, it keeps the issue of religious truth central in a cultural context in which truth is often seen as relative to the individual. Second, it keeps Jesus Christ central.²⁸⁵ Third, it unites the work of the Son and the Spirit within a single economy of salvation – an economy of salvation whose goal is drawing men and women into the life of the triune God. And fourth, it reinforces the mission of the church by reminding us that the missionary character of the church is rooted in the immanent life of triune God.²⁸⁶ So we do well to stress that our theology of religions must be grounded in the Trinity, for as McDermott and Netland conclude, “this is preferable to seeking an impossibly neutral common ground with other religions.”²⁸⁷

Tennent’s third conclusion declares that revelatory particularism embraces a canonical principle that asserts that the Bible is central to our understanding of God’s

²⁸³ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 222.

²⁸⁴ D’Costa believes that a Trinitarian provides the “context for a critical, reverent, and open engagement with otherness, without any predictable outcome.” As cited in Kärkkäinen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” 127. Netland adds, “Cultivation of a spirituality rooted in God’s holiness and moral character ought to be integral to an evangelical theology of religions, affecting not only how we think about other religions but also how we relate interpersonally to adherents of other traditions.” Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 311.

²⁸⁵ This is what baffles me about Yong’s claim to be providing a “Trinitarian Theology of Religions.” It’s almost as if he waves the banner of the Trinity just so that we can stress the third person over the second. Johnson says, “It is ironic that some Christian theologians have attempted to use Trinitarian approaches to undermine Christological approaches to religious diversity.” Later he claims, “Yong uses Trinitarian claims to undermine Christian teaching about the unity of the two hands of the Father.” Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 193, 205.

²⁸⁶ See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 193 for this list.

²⁸⁷ McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 82. Tennent says, “In short, the Trinity, and Jesus Christ in particular, is the hub around which all the doctrinal spokes of the Christian proclamation are held together.” Tennent, *invitation to World Missions*, 223.

self-disclosure. Without the Bible as our foundation of who God is and what He is doing, we are free to determine that He is and does whatever we desire. In this regard, Netland helpfully gives us a list of biblical themes for a theology of religions.²⁸⁸ Tennent adds, “Firm belief in personal and propositional revelation is the only sure way to deliver us from the abyss of relativism, endless human speculations, or worse, the notion that religions are nothing more than pragmatic, consumer preferences in a global religious marketplace.”²⁸⁹ If we are going to be true to who God is, we must hold firm to the Word of God as revealed in Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ as our foundation for who God is and what He is doing.

Fourth, revelatory particularism positions an evangelical theology of religions within the context of the *missio dei*. Again, it is interesting that those who call for pneumatological inclusivism do so with the understanding that God is a missional God whose universal salvific will is executed primarily through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. But central to God’s plan in redemptive history has always been the witness and proclamation of His people of what He is doing to the rest of the world, based on what Christ did for them and mandated them to do. Without the centrality of the proclamation and actions of the church in reaching the lost in this world, we run the risk of the church becoming a holding ground for God’s people until Christ’s second coming.

²⁸⁸ Netland says, First, there is one eternal God who is holy and righteous in all His ways. Second, God has sovereignly created all things, including human beings, who are made in His image. Third, God has graciously taken the initiative in revealing himself to humankind, and although God’s revelation comes in various forms, the definitive revelation for us is the written Scripture. Fourth, God’s creation, including humankind, has been corrupted by sin. Fifth, in His mercy God has provided a way, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, for sinful persons to be reconciled to God. And sixth, the community of the redeemed are to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to make disciples of all peoples including sincere adherents of other religious traditions, so that God is honored and worshipped throughout the earth. See Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 313-23.

²⁸⁹ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 224. See also Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 313.

Without the church's participation with the Spirit in this mission, the Church loses purpose in this world and must "get out of God's way" as He accomplishes His will without us.

Lastly, revelatory particularism should be both evangelical and catholic. What we mean here is that our commitment to the Gospel, centered on Christ and the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of unity, should strengthen and unify the church "as it is bounded by the centrality of Christ and the principle of canonicity."²⁹⁰ This will save us from the lucidity of pluralism and will give us a firm foundation of discernment when talking about the will and work of the Holy Spirit. Again, without Christological criteria in a discussion of the Spirit and of the Trinity, we actually lose the identity of the Spirit and begin to see the Spirit "blow out of control."

So, what should our response be to other religions and how are we to engage and interact with them? First, as Johnson reminds us, "Christian reflection on religious diversity... should be inflected through the doctrines of creation, fall and redemption, and not merely through a speculative account of the immanent Trinity." He continues, "We might view non-Christians religions 'as expressions of a genuine, although misguided, search and longing for God... (Therefore,) followers of Christ can relate to adherents of non-Christian religions first and foremost as human beings created in the image of God, and only secondarily in terms of their specific religious identity.'"²⁹¹ Netland helpfully adds that the doctrines of creation and revelation (humankind being created as religious

²⁹⁰ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 225.

²⁹¹ See Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 190-1. It may be more appropriate to claim, then, that people have the Spirit of God in them through the Imago Dei, rather than the Pentecost event, especially since the Pentecost event seems to be more appropriately linked to the brining of many to Christ *through the work of the Spirit*. Nevertheless, it is with this that we begin our engagement.

people who long for God and having revelation of who God is), and the reality of sin and satanic influence in our pursuit of God, are imperative to our understanding of other religious traditions.²⁹² If we start with these doctrines, we will be able to seriously consider the merits of other religions, as well as make a biblically informed decision regarding other religions, their practices, and the potential work of the Spirit in those who practice them.²⁹³ It will also allow us to no longer count each religion as “enemies of God” or as demonized or dehumanized, putting us all on even playing field as sinners in need of the grace of God given to us in the atoning death of Christ, seeking to know and be known by the God who loves and created us.

And it is *here* that I can finally say, as I have desired to for some time, that we can accept the *result* of Yong’ proposal, even if we have to disagree with the means that reach this end. Specifically, we must stress the importance of humble and loving dialogue and hospitality between Christians and those of other religions.²⁹⁴ We must begin by saying that dialogue is not *necessary* for a knowledge of God, something that Yong stresses. For Yong dialogue results from each person “bracketing” their beliefs in an attempt to listen carefully and take the other person seriously, while discerning how the Spirit is moving in their lives, and seeking to mutually learn more about who God is. We have discussed this briefly above, but let us unpack how interreligious dialogue will look when we carefully follow the Holy Spirit’s leading.

²⁹² Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 330-7.

²⁹³ McDermott and Netland make it clear that “the basic themes in Scripture concerning other religious beliefs and practices are clear.” Any worship and subsequent practices that are not directed towards the biblical God are condemned and considered idolatry. See McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 10. Again, we must see religions for what they are, as “misguided” attempts to fill the spiritual void in their hearts. This allows us to take their beliefs seriously, and attempt to explain Christ to them, the fullness of all things.

²⁹⁴ We remember that Yong reminded us that the gift of hospitality is intrinsically linked to the Spirit. Thus, all mankind can offer hospitality and loving dialogue since the Spirit of God is at work in all mankind.

The Goals of Interreligious Dialogue

First, it is essential to understand religion on its own terms and “along the line of its own central axis.”²⁹⁵ This means that we cannot claim that Muslims, or any other religious adherent, are “anonymous Christians,” but must seek to understand their true identity and beliefs. It also means that we must avoid reductionistic and simplistic generalizations of other religions.²⁹⁶ Careful listening is key, without presuppositions or agendas (as much as possible). This means that we cannot approach the conversation with the mindset, “this person is living a Spirit filled life,” if that person would not agree with this or even know its meaning. Instead, we meet our dialogue partners “believing that we and they share a common nature as those who have been created by the one God who is Father of all, that we live by His kindness, that we are responsible to Him, and that He purposes the same blessing for all of us.”²⁹⁷ Again, the common ground is not that God has saved us both through the Spirit’s internal work but that we have a shared context of things, of non-personal entities.²⁹⁸

Vanhoozer puts it another way, saying, “The Christian goal in interfaith dialogue is to invite others into the narrative that ‘relates’ God and identifies God as one who, in

²⁹⁵ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 171. See also Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 342. Vandegeer adds, “The scope of theology expands with our recognition of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit. Such expansion mitigates the tendency toward a priori decisions about the religions and compels us to meet them on their own terms. Such expansion anticipates our growth in faith by the deepening of our understanding of Christian mysteries in the broad compass of history.” See Vandegeer, “The Unity of Salvation,” 277.

²⁹⁶ See Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 325ff.

²⁹⁷ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 183. He continues that we are eager to receive what God has given them, knowing that we are not possessors of sole truth, but are to be signs and witnesses of Truth.

²⁹⁸ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 183. To be honest, I think that there is a stronger case for the universal presence of the Spirit in the process of creation and the Imago Dei than there is in the Pentecost event, but there is unfortunately no room to unpack this here. Again, Yong claims this to be the case as well. For Yong, we must believe in the Spirit’s working to take other religions seriously. I am not sure that this is necessarily true, although we do affirm the Spirit’s presence there. We can take other religions seriously, again, as we affirm their spiritual longing after God as part of the created purpose.

his inner and outer Trinitarian relations, is love.”²⁹⁹ When love is the underlying foundation of our dialogue, it will seek to see the other as one made in the Imago Dei, who is participating in a spiritual journey like us, and who will listen to the ways the Spirit is working in their, and our, lives. It will take our conversation partners seriously, not demonizing them or coming with the preconceived notion that everything they believe is wrong. And it will also push us toward a continued relationship with them on the basis of commonalities, rather than arguing over differences.

Second, as Newbigin says, “We participate in dialogue as members in the body of Christ – that body which is sent into the world by the Father to continue the mission of Jesus.”³⁰⁰ This has several implications. It means we are vulnerable, “putting our Christianity at risk...(recognizing) that the result of the dialogue may be a profound change in himself or herself.”³⁰¹ It also means that we meet on common ground, being ready to accept from them what God has given and shown them.³⁰² For the particularity of Christ’s action made universal through the action of the Spirit are both realities that are enacted in the history of redemption and are fragmentary due to human sin.³⁰³ Therefore, we come ready to listen and learn as God may use others to teach us more about who He is and how He works, as can be discerned in Scripture and in the life of Christ. And lastly it means that we will be deeply rooted in the life of the church. Although Yong believes that Christological criteria causes an impasse in interreligious dialogue and the inability

²⁹⁹ Vanhoozer, *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 64. He continues, “True dialogue demands the practice, and not simply the discourse, of Christian love.” Vanhoozer, *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 69.

³⁰⁰ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 184.

³⁰¹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 184-6.

³⁰² Newbigin says, “We are prepared to receive judgement and correction, to find that our Christianity hides with its appearance of obedience the reality of disobedience.” Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 182-4. Also, “(Christians) will expect to learn as well as to teach, to receive as well as to give, in this common human enterprise of living and building up a common life.” Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 175.

³⁰³ D’Costa, “The Trinity in Interreligious Dialogues,” 582.

to appreciate others, I propose that it is more appropriate to claim that Christological criteria *detached from careful listening and learning, and a preexisting relationship* can cause an impasse as presuppositions and preexisting agendas can overrun the goal of mutual edification.³⁰⁴ In the end we see that Christ is not an impasse, but *is* a clear discontinuity with other religions.³⁰⁵

With an underlying foundation of love, we will be able to dialogue in humility, ready to learn from one another and seek to work toward a mutual God-glorifying goal. Although it may seem to help, a Christian who brackets their convictions *past the part of humble listening* does not lead to authentic dialogue but a manufactured one that loses the objects of one's hope and epistemology. Even the universalist Jürgen Moltmann says, "The scandal of the cross must not be downplayed in a Christian theology of religions in order to conform to an ideology of pluralism or an anemic doctrine of tolerance."³⁰⁶ Without introducing our Christian convictions into the dialogue, it is no longer interreligious, and it is surely not authentic. We once again agree with Newbigin who says, "The Christian will meet his or her friend and neighbor of another faith as one who is committed to Jesus Christ as their ultimate authority, who openly acknowledges this commitment, and seeks to understand and enter into dialogue with a partner of another commitment on that basis."³⁰⁷ Lastly, Welker adds, "The Christian, coming from a

³⁰⁴ It is also interesting to remember, as McDermott reminds us, that all religions seem to be exclusivistic in their claims. This is not primarily a "Christian" problem, but is the reality when it comes to any religion. See McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions?*, 42.

³⁰⁵ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 337ff. That doesn't mean that we must abandon Christ as our dialogue, but that we begin with an understanding that what we believe is intrinsically different from any other religion.

³⁰⁶ As cited in Volf and Welker, *God's Life in Trinity*, 109.

³⁰⁷ He continues that the Gospel will shape their presuppositions. "Confessing Christ... as the true light, one cannot accept any other alleged authority as taking priority over this." See Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 164-5.

particular perspective, is both encouraged and entitled to witness to the triune God of the Bible and His will of salvation, yet at the same time he or she is prepared to learn from the other.”³⁰⁸ Christological criteria is therefore *necessary* to our pneumatology, our theology of religions, and our epistemology and worldview, and cannot be bracketed out of our interreligious dialogue.

Third, our participation in this dialogue comes from “believing and expecting that the Holy Spirit can and will use this dialogue to do his own sovereign work, to glorify Jesus by converting to him *both* the partners in the dialogue.”³⁰⁹ Mutual edification, sanctification, and potential conversion is something that we must see as a real possibility in our conversations. Newbigin continues that if we start from this common ground, then our dialogue will be primarily about “what is happening in the world now, how we understand it, and how we can take part in it,” and less about our eternal destinies.³¹⁰ This will allow us to discern where the Spirit is joining us together for the sake of the Kingdom and worry less about whether or not they seem to “believe enough” to be saved. Interreligious dialogue, although often having an evangelistic goal in mind, cannot be used *only* for that end. But, in discussing what they believe and how it shapes their worldview, there may be opportunities to see where the Spirit is in fact preparing their hearts for a discussion about Christ.³¹¹ We must seek to be open to the new ways in

³⁰⁸ Welker, *The Work of the Spirit*, 66.

³⁰⁹ Italics mine. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 186.

³¹⁰ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 179. This falls in line with what Yong says. Dialogue is less for the purpose of conversion, and more for the realization of how God is working outside of the Church.

³¹¹ Miles says, “Because salvation is found only in Christ and not in any religion that is not centered on the Gospel of Christ, Christians must engage in dialogue with religious others.” Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 341. Yet, here I tend to disagree with Miles who says that “the goal of Christians in interreligious dialogue must be the conversion of their conversation partners to Christ.” See Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 344. I think, again, that this would be our hope in interreligious dialogue, but I think the goal should be something much neutral (participation in social justice, willingness to agree and

which the Spirit can work in our lives, and theirs, discerning those ways through the Word and through Christ. Only then will we seek to glorify God in our interreligious conversations.

For Newbigin, when we start with the glory of God, we will see four implications of interreligious dialogue.³¹² First, we shall expect, look for, and welcome all the signs of the grace of God at work in the lives of those who do not know Jesus as Lord. Again, with Christological or *logos* related criteria for discernment of the work of the Spirit, we will better be able to find ways in which the Spirit is pouring the grace of God into the lives of those in whom we are interacting. Second, the Christian will be eager to cooperate with people of all faiths and ideologies in all projects which agree with the Christian's understanding of God's purpose in history. A pluralistic mindset says that we must participate in all projects with religious others under the banner of tolerance and equality, but the revelatory particularist (Tennent's term) seeks to affirm the work of God through the Spirit by partnering with projects and causes that share in the work of the Kingdom. Again, we come in Christian love and humility but not at the expense of our convictions and our object of hope and life. Third, this kind of shared commitment to the business of the world provides the context for true dialogue. Like we said above, dialogue must stem from what is happening in the world and how our worldviews seek to grasp it. Evangelistic hope is necessary, but practical cooperation will be the seeds and cultivation that allow God to grow the Church. And fourth, the essential contribution of the Christian to the dialogue will simply be the telling of the story, the story of Jesus, the story of the

dialogue, etc.). At the end of the day, we hope that these neutral goals lead to their conversion, yet our dialogue alone is not set up for this goal primarily.

³¹² For a more in depth look at this list, see Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 180-2.

Bible. Again, we do not come with a catechetical agenda, a preconceived evangelistic methodology, or a “tolerant” indifference or ignorance, but authentically as witnesses to the Truth and the Life as we have experienced them in our lives.³¹³

Finally, if the Spirit is working in the world but needs those who are aware of His presence to name His reality in the world, then it is clear that the Church has a vital part to play in the mission of the Son and the Spirit as well as in God’s interaction with religious others. Stephen Holmes says, “A church that refuses the call to mission is failing to be the church God calls it to be just as fundamentally as a church that refuses the call to be loving. Just as purposeful, cruciform, self-sacrificial sending is intrinsic to God’s own life, being sent in a cruciform, purposeful, and self-sacrificial way must be intrinsic to the church being the church.”³¹⁴ This is what we have observed throughout this paper: If God is a God of mission by nature, then the mission of the Son and the Spirit, coming from the will of God, must be continued by the Church today. If the Spirit completes the work by Himself, then the Church becomes a country club of believers passively waiting until the end comes or merely becomes another nonprofit relief organization. But if the church takes seriously its missionary mandate, then it knows, as Tienou and Hiebert remind us, that “the task... is to translate and communicate the Gospel in the language and culture of real people in the particularities of their lives so that it may transform them, their societies, and their cultures into what God intends for them to be.”³¹⁵ The church in the life of the Spirit is one that is engaged in culture,

³¹³ McDermott would say that these things are possible because of the following biblical suggestions. First, God wants the Gentiles to know Him. Second, many outside Hebrew/Christian traditions *have* known Him. And third, God’s people learn from those outside the Jewish and Christian Churches. See McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions?*, 74-80.

³¹⁴ Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology,” 89.

³¹⁵ Tienou and Hiebert, “Missional Theology,” 225.

seeking to bring heavenly realities of the New Age to the present order, including the proclamation that Christ is King and is coming again to reign eternally over those who know, love, and worship Him.

Agreeing with Tennent, we have seen throughout our study that our cultural engagement must be fully grounded in and understood as a natural expression of Christian theology, particularly our understanding of Trinitarianism, creation, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. It must also take seriously sin and spiritual warfare as we seek ways for the New Creation to break into the present order.³¹⁶ For although the Church is correctly called *ekklesia*, or those who are “called out,” we are also called *into* the world as part of the ongoing invasion of the age to come into the present age, through the Holy Spirit.³¹⁷ Part of this is the redemption of things that have been given over to sinful distortions, including world religions.³¹⁸

To restate, we do not approach religious others as projects or as demonized or dehumanized beings, but with the humble love of Christ that seeks to bring light to darkness and hope to hopelessness. As Volf reminds us, “Falsely to call things profane and purge them out, to exclude others through prejudice or violence is sin, and it must be unmasked and exposed for all human beings are all equally worthy of respect because they are created in the image of God.”³¹⁹ The opposite of this exclusion, which is often

³¹⁶ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 187.

³¹⁷ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 436.

³¹⁸ This is another area where we break with Yong, for he sees the religions of the world as providentially sustained by the Spirit of God, and thus gives very little room for sin/idolatry in the universal presence of God. Here, however, we see other religions as sinful distortions of their created goal to long for and seek after a relationship with God their creator. Yet, although our conclusion about world religions is less positive than Yong’s, we also remember that Christianity also falls into the category of world religions that can be given over to sinful distortions. As such, we know that Christianity know where to point to Truth, but is similarly engaged with the process of searching for and seeking this Truth. This is the common ground that we share with other religions.

³¹⁹ Volf, “A Vision of Embrace,” 202.

the stance of the church toward those of other religious backgrounds, is to “embrace” or open our arms to those around us.³²⁰ We may see other religions as distortions of a spiritual longing to know God, but that does not mean we may dismiss them as profane or evil, for even we often give ourselves over to sinful distortions of our spiritual longing for God. Instead, we yearn to embrace the differences that we encounter, seek to learn from them on their own terms, and learn and grow together in the power, inspiration, and illumination of the Spirit.

Summary

As we begin our decent toward the end of this paper, it is important to seek to discern how to engage and interact with those from other religious backgrounds in light of what we have already discussed above. We can stress the particularity of Christ *while* affirming the universality of the Spirit; there is no need for the abandonment of one or the other. And with the Word of God as our foundation, we will have the criteria needed to discern the work of the Spirit and, better yet, know how we are being called to participate in it. As we begin to participate in the mission of the Spirit, as has been mandated to us by both the Father and the Son, we must remember the humility and love necessary to approach those who are different with an openness and willingness to listen and learn, while holding firm to our convictions that we have seen and experienced as reality.

³²⁰ Volf says that he believes that embrace is what takes place between the persons of the Trinity in their perichoretic relationship. Volf, “A Vision of Embrace,” 203.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Final Thoughts on Yong's Proposal

I begin my conclusion by affirming Van Gelder who says, “The developmental work of the Spirit needs to be affirmed and sought by the church in our changing context.”³²¹ Welker similarly reminds us that “a church that seeks to restrict and control the Spirit, as too dangerous and unpredictable, may be safe, but it has signed its own death warrant. A Church that seeks to follow where the Spirit leads will have to expect the unexpected and be prepared to be shaken to its core. But that’s life, the life of the Spirit.”³²² As those who have been recreated by the power of the Spirit and who now live in that power, we must continue seeking to understand the ways in which the Spirit works in this world and begin to participate in the work as expected of us. But, once again this must be done through the often difficult task of discernment and based on the criteria that is given to us, namely the Bible. Pneumatological speculation is not inherently a bad thing, but when it becomes detached from biblical theology, history, and pneumatological and Trinitarian orthodoxy, the Spirit can truly “blow out of control.”

As we cited in the beginning of section four, we can sum up “Yong’s three axioms for the development of his pneumatological theology of religions, which are the

³²¹ Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 43.

³²² Welker, *The Work of the Spirit*, 26.

universal presence of God in the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit in the Imago Dei that is present in every human, and that the religions of the world are providentially sustained by the Spirit of God for divine purposes.”³²³ With that reminder, let us briefly unpack whether we affirm or deny each of these in order to sum up our thoughts on Yong’s overall Pneumatological theology of religions.

Throughout this study we have seen that we can affirm God’s universal presence through His Spirit. This is clearly seen throughout Scripture and, as we have seen above, to claim that God is constrained to the Church is to have an insufficient understanding of the sovereignty and omnipresence of God. Yet we must make a distinction between our belief and Yong’s. The universal presence of God in the work of the Spirit cannot be the same as the universal *indwelling* of the Spirit in all of humanity, *unless* we hold a position like the one discussed by Crowe above. This is because, unless we claim that the indwelling of the Spirit is ineffective or dormant in some, the universal indwelling of the Spirit that results in regeneration and a desire toward the will of God would not leave people worshipping gods that are not the Triune God. If the Spirit indwelt all of humanity in the same way, and the Spirit was enacting His divine mission, then we would see universal salvation and worship of God. However, since this is not the case, we either must conclude God gives the indwelling of the Spirit to those who respond to Him in faith, or the Spirit works in varying degrees in all of humanity.

If we are to try to reconcile Yong’s view with what is biblically founded, a helpful corrective here is to view the common ground of mankind as the *Imago Dei* that resulted at the creation of humanity. Pinnock also talks about this as the common grace of God.

³²³ Kärkkäinen, “How to Speak of the Spirit Among Religions,” 54.

God provided the way for mankind to be saved by first, making his presence universal through the Spirit, and second by providing the means through the particular atoning work of Jesus Christ.³²⁴ We should therefore seek dialogue and mutual searching for God because this is what we are created for, and we should give others respect and love in this primarily because they are made in the image of God like us. Yong believes that the life-giving Spirit has been poured out in every human during creation, but if that is the case, then why do some come to a saving knowledge of who God is and others do not? Unlike Yong, I would assert that the Spirit in those of other religions, or even those who are agnostic or atheistic, pushes them toward their created purpose of seeking God, but they miss the Christological criteria by which they could discern and recognize the Spirit for who He really is. God's free gift of grace to humanity is that He has given the Spirit to all of mankind to soften their hearts to the good news of His offered redemption and to allow them to live lives filled with the fruits of the Spirit. However, some in the hardness of their sinful state, choose to seek others gods in their lives. Others seek other gods because they have not yet received the Christological criteria that reveals to them who God is. So, we conclude, similarly to Crowe, that mankind has the Spirit given to them at creation, but they are in need of the Word of God, either in Christ or in Scripture that reveals what Christ has done, to bring them to a saving knowledge of God that reveals to them the Spirit that has been in them all along.

³²⁴ Again, we must also be careful not to say that the Spirit alone worked during creation, or that the "particular atonement" of Christ comes after, or a part of, the Spirit's work. As we saw above, many pneumatological inclusivists try to make the case the Christ is participating in the mission of the Spirit, but we know that this ignores the orthodox understanding of the processions of the Trinity, as well as the biblical data for the sending of the Spirit from the Son. Thus we must say that many "Spirit Christologists," having right motives, are incorrect in their understanding of the processions and missions of the Trinity and thus cannot hold the claims that they do.

This helps keep the inseparable operations of the Trinity intact while explaining how the Spirit could be working in the rest of the world without the necessity of universal salvation. Just like the affirmation of the universal lordship or universal atonement of Christ, the universal presence of the Spirit of God in all of mankind does not necessitate that all *are* saved, but rather that all *have the opportunity* to be saved since the Spirit is working within them. Because of this we can learn from other religions and understand that hospitality and dialogue are important tools for all of mankind.³²⁵ We must hold to Christ as the discerning key for what does and does not constitute the work of the Spirit, and we must see that the fruit of a Christological understanding is the Spirit's provision of salvation for those individuals.

This again stresses the importance of the Church in the world. If the world needs Christ to discern the Spirit's work, and the Church is the only community who is aware of this criteria, then it is the Church's responsibility to bring others to an awareness of who Christ is, what He has offered, and what it means for the world. Some may say this is "arrogant or triumphalistic," but throughout the history of the world God has chosen a people for himself *to be a light for the nations* by revealing His person and salvific will to them. God has always used His people to spread the Word to those caught in idolatry, showing them the error of their way *in order to show them* the way in which they should walk. God never chooses His people to condemn others, demonize them, or even hold their sin over their heads; instead He asks them to be light in the darkness, shining the light of Christ and providing the way toward Truth to a world groping for it in all the

³²⁵ We can affirm with Yong that religions are ways in which God shows grace, since they can be means by which spiritual groping for God can occur, but we must see that they are not ever the ends by which God intended for humanity. Nowhere in the Bible does God say that the worship of other gods was a sufficient supplement for worshipping Him.

wrong places. If God provided only one way to salvation, we should be thankful for His grace and mercy and want to share it instead of demanding that He must provide more ways for different people. God's mercy must be celebrated and shared instead of mocked and considered unloving.

Finally, we must say that World Religions have right motives in fulfilling humanity's desire toward seeking God, but they are still sinful distortions of that right motive.³²⁶ Again, we are not to approach them on the basis of their sinfulness but with the mercy and grace of God that reminds us that we are so often guilty of the same idolatry in our own lives. The Spirit is working in other Religions, but that does not necessitate any salvific role in them. It need only mean that they can be used as the starting point in one's spiritual journey toward their Creator God, which is to end in the particular act of Jesus Christ. Much more could be said and unpacked in this regard, but it is sufficient to say here what we have already said, that Christians are to approach dialogue and hospitality with religious others in the same way that they are to do so with anyone else they meet. They offer love and grace, in humility, for a naturally sinful people who are making their way back to their Creator through what has been offered to them. And since the Gospel is not exclusive but is for all of mankind, then the particularity of Christ is offered through the universal work of the Spirit of God, who is discerned as such through the Church's witness and testimony to Christ.

In section four we looked at some critiques of Yong's proposal in an attempt to see how it has been received by many today. Overall, we must be careful not to throw the

³²⁶ Again, I tend to agree with Pinnock here who says that religions can be "Spirit-used means of pointing to and making contact with God." This does not mean that other religions are salvific in themselves, but that the Spirit can begin using them to search for God, which finds its true meaning and fulfillment in Christ. See Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 102.

baby out with the bath water by completely throwing Yong's proposal out on the basis of a few weaknesses. Instead, my hope in this study was to carefully sift his proposal for the ways in which he has helpfully called out the Church today to reform their thinking about the work of the Spirit and how we relate and dialogue with other religions. I believe he has done this exceptionally well, bringing up an extremely helpful and important discussion by breaking it out of the classical paradigm of understanding the matter. The universal presence of God in the Spirit, our ability to view other religions with love and respect, and the importance of understanding that the Spirit is not contained to the Church are all helpful correctives in a day when triumphalism and exclusivism can run rampant in the Western Church. Unfortunately, his Trinitarian approach, his stressing the work of the Spirit alone, and his theology of religions seem to ultimately misunderstand Trinitarian theology of the divine missions and processions, as well as a proper understanding of the work and person of the Spirit and His intrinsic connection to the work and person of the Son. I would love to see Yong revise his proposal with the importance of Christological criteria for the discernment of the work of the Spirit and see how he would answer many of the questions above. He is so close to groundbreaking thinking in this area, but could use a few revisions to bring his proposal back within historical orthodoxy and proper theological grounding.

I will end with a helpful quote by Lesslie Newbigin to ponder as we conclude our discussion on the work of the Spirit and the necessity of Christological criteria in other Religions.

It is not easy to resist the contemporary tide of thinking and feeling which seems to sweep us irresistibly in the direction of an acceptance of religious pluralism, and away from any confident affirmation of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ. It is not easy to challenge the reigning plausibility stricture. It is much easier to conform. The overwhelming dominance of relativism in contemporary culture makes any firm confession of belief suspect... (But), 'we also want that unity (of humankind), and therefore seek the truth by which alone humankind can become one.' That truth is not a doctrine or a worldview or even a religious experience; it is certainly not to be found by repeating abstract nouns like justice and love; it is the man Jesus Christ in whom God was reconciling the world. The truth is personal, concrete, historical."³²⁷

The particularism of Jesus Christ does not mean the exclusion of those outside the Church but rather awakens the Church to its responsibility, its mandate, to be revealing Christ to those who seek to know and worship God. The Spirit is working; He has gone before us; it is time for the Church to be obedient and name the reality of the Spirit of Christ by witnessing to the salvation He offers to all those who believe.

³²⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 169-70.

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APPENDIX A: VITA

The author of this work is Daniel Joseph Hoffstetter. Born September 3, 1990, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he has lived in Center Valley, Pennsylvania most of his life. During that time, he received his formal education through the St. Michaels and Southern Lehigh School Systems. Upon completion of required studies at Southern Lehigh High School, he entered Alvernia University in Reading, Pennsylvania to study Athletic Training. After two years, he transferred to Eastern University in Saint Davids, Pennsylvania where he received a bachelor of arts degree with a major in Biblical Studies. He immediately entered Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts where he received his Masters of Divinity in May, 2015. He will complete his studies and receive his Master of Theology in Theology and Culture in May, 2017.

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